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Publication Date

2013

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Hong Kong Dreams and Disney Fantasies:
How Hong Kong Disneyland (Controversially) Indigenizes
Space, Labor, and Consumption

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Jenny Banh

March 2014

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Yolanda T. Moses, Chairperson
Dr. Christina Schwenkel
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Dr. Thomas C. Patterson

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The Dissertation of Jenny Banh is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank those Hong Kong residents who took time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed. They were truly kind and often further recommended more people to interview. During my time in the field I taught literature, journalism, and SATs to HK students and their kindness was a hug whenever I needed it. They taught me a lot about the liminality of Hong Kong culture. My dissertation committee of Yolanda Moses, Christine Schwenkel, Tracy Fisher, Michael Kearney, Thomas Patterson, and Lynda Bell guided me steadfastly. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Michael Kearney who was a wonderful kind advisor and I miss him often. Lynda Bell reined me in and gave me a lot of structure, information, and guidance that I am very grateful for. Dr. Bell also made me rethink of HK history and space. Christine Schwenkel kindly challenged me and pushed me to rethink the “big picture” including theory and a priori assumption. Dr. Schwenkel made my writing more professional and theoretically sound. Tracy Fisher gave me practical time management advice. I would also like to thank Thomas Patterson who has been such a great captain of our entire anthropology department for many years. Dr. Patterson is dignified, distinguished, and down to earth. He had always guided me with great advice and is very funny. Although Gene N. Anderson was not on my “official” committee member, he read every dissertation word I wrote and made valuable comments using expertise from his own Hong Kong 1960’s fieldwork days. He was my *de facto* seventh member. Dr. Anderson generously directed me toward theories, authors, and contacts. His stories of how his family not only lived

but also prospered in Hong Kong gave me untold hope. My gratitude to my dream team committee is immense.

This dissertation would not be written if it were not for Yolanda T. Moses who has been on this journey with me for 8 long years. She met me when I was a first year and gracefully accepted when I asked her to be my chair. I have wanted to be an anthropologist since I was eight years old and she has helped me accomplish my life's dream. Dr. Moses employed me as her Graduate Student Researcher, which taught me a lot of research skills but also put food on the table. Every step of the way from my examinations, pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, and dissertation; she has mentored me. She is an guardian angel, model academic, upright truth teller, and inspiring coach wrapped up into one. I have never met a more giving academic and I am grateful for every second I was in her company. Howard Winent told me that I was very lucky to have her as my chair. Bleep right Howard! I know I am one of the lucky .001% ones to have such an advisor. I cannot ever express what her daily kindness, generosity, and wise guidance that has a lifetime imprint on me. No words...

I would also like to acknowledge my anthropology Core Theory instructors: Thomas C. Patterson, Wendy Ashmore and Eugene N. Anderson who taught invaluable theory. Tom Patterson was just an unrelenting truth teller. Dr Ashmore is extremely brilliant. My one anthropology regret is that I did not have the chance to take Dr. Ashmore's space class. Juliet McMullin and Sang Hee Lee were always kind and taught me other fields of anthropology. I have also learned significantly from Edna Bonacich,

Sally Ness, and Debra Weber. I also want to thank my UCLA, CGU, and UCI professors Clarence Hall, Diego Vigil, Kyeyoung Park, Leo Chavez, Sharon Bays, Mariko Tamanoi, Robert Garfias, Alessandro Duranti, Lourdes Arguelles, and Nancy Levine. I would also like to thank my California Polytechnic, Pomona mentors: Patricia De Freitas, Gilbert Cadena, and Haiming Liu who have guided me in pedagogy. Ms. Lilia Liderbach, Ms. Becky Campbell, and Ms. Felecia Garrett are always the model for how to make life run so smoothly which is probably because of their total UCR expertise. Aurora Chang, David Martinez, and Erica Wong provided excellent advice and encouragement. I would like to thank the UCLA Labor Center and UCR GRMP Fellowships.

I also want to thank my cohort who were my brothers and sisters in arms in this grueling Phd process: Kyoungduk Mun, Jennifer Chmilar, Silvia Ventura Luna, Sandra Xochipiltecatl, Melissa King, Jele Radovic, Lisa Garibaldi, Dan Leonard, Ben Fiero, and Nick Welcome. I want to shout out to the girls in particular, as we are a motley women crew but together we are unstoppable. Silvia, Jele and Meliss, my dissertation group have pulled, pushed, and cajoled me and shared my cri de coeur. I would like to give special thanks to my sister and her husband for giving me wonderful contacts. I want to thank my mom and dad who did not want me to go to Hong Kong, but supported me when I needed them most when I had a medical issue in the field. I am but one leaf from my cantonese grandmothers and grandfathers tree. I am my female ancestors dream. I also need to thank my former UCLA dorm mates and lifelong girlfriends Kim Tran, Judy Liu, Maricela Keiz, Ly Pham, and Ruby Chen. All of us were first generation

working class college students and we all made it. Also Christina Owens, Herb Ruffin, and Linda Kim inspire me everyday with their gentle spirits. Jennifer Chang and Lia Guntle have been with me since 8th grade and never laughed when I told them: “One day I want to be an anthropologist and go to UCLA.”

I want to thank Alexandra Jacqueline Slusser-Banh and Maxwell “Chuck” Slusser-Banh who went on this crazy ride with me and who helped me see the site with new eyes. They improve my academics by grounding me everyday. Everyday in Hong Kong when I saw heart hollowed mothers who were domestic workers or nannies to other children; I remembered how lucky I was to have them by my side. They are worth more to me than 100 Phds and 100 University Press books combined.

Last but not least I want to thank my husband Sean Slusser who gave up one year of paid History employment and momentum so we could be together. We have traveled around the globe several times now together and have had many adventures. He organized, and made a lot of essential decisions on where we should settle but he mostly is my soul mate and theory sounding board. Since our post UCLA graduation, Masters, and now PhD work we have somehow (with many bumps and firestorms) along the way – evolved together. He never complained even when we were all petrified, drenched, and walking home in Typhoon 8 weather. Thus this dissertation is dedicated to him.

Dedicated to my parents and Sean Slusser

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Hong Kong Dreams and Disney Fantasies:
How Hong Kong Disneyland (Controversially) Indigenizes
Space, Labor, and Consumption

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, March 2014
Dr. Yolanda Moses, Chairperson

In 2005, Hong Kong imported the ultimate piece of Americana – Disneyland: the globe’s largest media company and themepark operator. This dissertation looks at how the Hong Kong Disneyland indigenizes in terms of Space, Labor, and Consumption. In 1997 Hong Kong had faced many economic challenges, and thus in 1998 entered into a deal with Disney to economically revitalize it. This deal was touted as viable entity for the former British colony of Hong Kong, who in turn paid 90% of the 5.4 billion dollar (USD) cost of infrastructure for the park, but only gained 53% shares. Many Hong Kong students, scholars, activists, and local community members felt finagled by this transnational corporation and question the economic benefit to Hong Kong people. This dissertation chronicles fourteen months I spent in Hong Kong, SAR China from 2009-2010, in addition to two trips of two weeks visits of in 2008 and 2007. During this three-year time span I conducted 62 questionnaires, surveys, oral histories, and semi-formal interviews. My dissertation combines insights from cultural studies, globalization, and post colonial theories. I argue indigenization attempts of space, labor and consumption

are a “mixed bag” with unequal outcomes for Hong Kong and Disneyland Inc. The simple East Vs West Culture War is flawed as it obscures local community resistance/agency/collusion, intra-national ethnic disputes, and evolving global labor processes. The subject highlights a node in the global commodity chain in line with the most recent globalization scholarship and offers a new appraisal of how community members/workers resist transnational corporations that setup in their communities with adds to the anthropology of state and popular culture literature set. My thesis is that in some ways this corporation fails at true indigenization to the community because of the original unfair state-corporate partnership terms, highly publicized sweatshop labor claims, and intra-national and international culture wars that are occurring. The locals remain very ambivalent about the park and often cite the park operation deal, labor inequality, service, and bad publicity as negatives. On the other hand feng shui, hotels, and the trilingual amenities is performed quite well. HKDL did provide thousands of jobs for Hong Kong residents and transnational workers. But the unanticipated culture wars between Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong people mar the park goer experience. Ocean Park, the local theme park competitor is the preferred park. The international, transnational, and local rank and file workers, who complain of unequal treatment complicate full labor indigenization. This is especially seen in how Filipino dancers are treated in comparison to local dancers. Lastly locals poorly received the food consumption indigenization attempts because of prices, selection, and wait time. This popular culture and state project, Hong Kong Disneyland becomes a literal and metaphorical battleground for different international groups.

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HONG KONG DISNEYLAND TIMELINE 1997- 2010

- 1997 July 1 - Hong Kong returns to Mainland Chinese Rule
1998 August - The Walt Disney Company and the Hong Kong government announce their intention to build Hong Kong Disneyland
- 1999 February - Penny's Bay, Lantau Island is announced as the future site of the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, which is environmentally controversial
December 10 - Disney and the Hong Kong Government sign agreement
- 2001 Don Robinson named group managing HKDL director
- 2003 January - Start of construction of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort
November 22 - Disney announces that an earlier opening day of the park has been re-scheduled from 2006 to 2005.
- 2004 August 16 -18-day Rehearsal Begins
August 30 - HKDL orders health inspectors, who are investigating food poisoning at Disney to remove identifying caps. This causes bad publicity and forces Disney officials to apologize.
September 12- HKDL opens to the public at 13:00 local time, which is the fastest Disneyland ever built.
There is bad publicity on the opening day. There are protests from labor groups, pop stars, and a former HKDL worker attempts suicide.
Nov 8 - The attendance is poor so the park gives HK residents a \$50 HKDL discount, and will not release official attendance numbers.
- 2005 January 3 – A ticket is sold that is valid for a one-time-visit within three months. This later causes a lot of controversial during holidays.
- 2006 January 10 - Managing director Don Robinson replaced by Bill Earnest
February 1 - The park tickets sells out for Chinese New Year/ Lunar New Year. Irrate Mainland Chinese ticket holders try to gain entry by jumping the gates. There is pandemonium as children are hoisted over the gates.
February 4 – An emotional Bill Earnest apologizes for ticket chaos
June 1 - HKDL announces release of summer passes to boost its first year attendance
June 24 - HKDL decides not to serve shark fin soup amid environmental protests over sustainability.
July 1 - \$450 (HKD) pass launched allowing unlimited access until September 28

July 13 - Autotopia, Stitch Encounter, and UFO Zone open in HKDL as first part of its expansion
 August - Exclusive enticements are provided for Summer Pass holders so as to further boost the park's attendance
 September - Despite selling more than 60,000 Summer Passes since July 1, HKDL misses its attendance target of 5.6 million guests in the first year of operation, with only about 5 million guests entered the park since the opening
 September 28 - HKDL launches its annual pass
 September 30 - Disney's Halloween celebration held for the first time. It runs through October 31, 2006.
 December 14 - HKDL announces three new attractions to be added to the park in 2007-2008
 December 19 - HKDL announces 4 new attractions and entertainment venues to open in 2008 with "It's a Small World": Muppet Mobile Lab, High School Musical Celebration, Turtle Talk with Crush, and the Art of Animation

- 2007 April 28 - "It's a Small World" opens in HKDL as the first expansion of Fantasyland
- 2008 July 10 - The Hong Kong Legislative Council approve land expansion
 December 13 - Groundbreaking ceremony for the three land construction
- 2008 September 12 - HKDL celebrates its 5th anniversary
 January 21 - HKDL hosts "Celebration in the Air"
 November 18 - Toy Story Land opens

Source: South China Morning Post: September 9, 2006 , About.com, Wikipedia ^{1,2,3}

Introduction

Indigenizing Disney

CHAPTER ONE

Sunday morning, January 31, 2010. My family and I excitedly ran under the red and gold Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) gate, past the feng shui appropriate water sculpture of Mickey Mouse riding a bronze whale. It was surprisingly crowded that day, unlike other times during the week when it seemed almost desolate. The Hong Kong Disneyland Main Street USA buildings, modeled after a turn of the twentieth century American Midwestern town, had banners with Chinese calligraphy in beautiful, delicate red brushstrokes. The Hong Kong Disneyland cast members explained one of these banners saying, "there are five types of lucky coming to your door." It was Lunar New Year. 农历新年 There were crowds of Mainland Chinese, Hong Kongese, Indian, American, and Southeast Asian tourists. At Hong Kong Disneyland, I could see the materialization of the indigenization (modifications to fit local culture) of space, labor, and consumption. For example, we heard Chinese music blaring from the walkway and red and gold flags lined every flagpole; this scene was juxtaposed with Alice of *Alice in Wonderland* walking with happy children surrounding her. Goofy and Mickey Mouse waved and strolled around in Chinese traditional gold and red garb. Overjoyed, all the children rushed up to these characters. Oddly, Mulan, the Chinese Disney warrior

princess, was not as popular with Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong families as the other figures were. Was this because the Chinese tourists do not recognize the Disney version of an actual Chinese historical heroine?

I surveyed the crowd as it gathered for the Main Street parade. The Westerners, along with the young Hong Kong locals, seemed excited; the Cantonese elderly, by contrast, looked bored, and the Mainland Chinese looked puzzled as to what to expect next. As we were waiting in line I could see a *mêlée* brewing. In front of me I could see four Hong Kong teenagers hook their arms together and widen their feet as if in metaphorical battle formation against the Mainland Chinese tourists who threaten to jump the queue at anytime. These Hong Kong teens were determined to not let any Mainland Chinese person cut in, which made me more conscious of my position in the line. I could smell the “hot and spicy” flavored popcorn and see the “pies” which were more like western cakes, and would have puzzled many American palates. We tried to ask for directions for Fantasyland from some of the “cast members” or workers with varying degrees of success. Some told us they did not know the answer and went back to their smart phones, while others answered our questions joyfully, telling us to have a “magical day.”

Indeed, the guest services attendants seemed overjoyed to explain the ruby-colored calligraphy banner phrases lining the City Hall Building. A female Disney cast member said that it was Chinese for “tiger, tiger- make you proud” or “tiger strong” 虎虎生威—but she was interrupted by another female guide who said that phrase would sound bad in Cantonese. Thus they modified it to “Tiger, tiger, felicity.” 虎虎生福 I

asked them to write it in Chinese for me. During the Main Street parade, I could see Filipino dancers, very few of which were Hong Kong residents singing the English phrases “It is amazing” and “Hey, hey” to the audience. Dale, the chipmunk, in a traditional Chinese New Year outfit, waved to the crowd, and the crowd waved back. Alice was speaking in Chinese but singing in English. Later, in Grizzly Gulch, we observed an exciting, eardrum-splitting Chinese dragon dance. There were two dragons with four people underneath them, working hard in the humid air. One dragon had a gold covering; the other dragon was colored red . They danced around each other in a playful and combative manner. As the hidden dancers climbed onto one another's shoulders, the dragons grew to epic heights, both of the dragon’s mouth now eight feet in the air opened up to uncurl a red scroll that read "Gong Hey Fat Choy.” (Happy New Year) 農曆新年.

I use my story of my Chinese New Year trip to Hong Kong Disneyland as an introduction to several key themes that this dissertation will explore. First and foremost is the concept of indigenization. Broadly defined, indigenization refers to changes made by some transnational corporations to fit the local culture, which is an ongoing process. Many social scientists have written about the indigenization of practices, (e.g. Anderson 2005, Appadurai 1996, Friedman 2002, Jordan 2003, Kottak 1997, Miller 1998, Raz 1999, Ong 1999, Schwenkel 2009, Watson 1997, Welz 2004, Yan 1997 et al). My dissertation focuses on the process of indigenization of Disneyland in Hong Kong. I particularly focus on the indigenization in the areas of utilization of space, labor relations, and consumption (both food and products). More specifically, this dissertation

will examine how the park is indigenizing its space through the placement of buildings and Hong Kong local reactions to it. Henri Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is not just geographic but also mental, political, and historical. I argue that Hong Kong Disneyland is not merely a space of “play” in late capitalism; rather it is a space that reveals much about international tensions between East and West and intra-national tensions among different Chinese publics. The physical construction of Hong Kong Disneyland is excellent as well as the park’s organization. The park has exceptional lavatories and sincerely follows traditional Chinese space patterns called *feng shui*. The past negative public relations have significantly marred Hong Kong resident’s reactions to the park. Additionally the unequal contract between the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) and the Disney Corporation is still fresh in some of the Hong Kong taxpayer’s minds. The intra-ethnic conflicts between local Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese tourists are another cause of disagreement. Space is important because it is one explanation of why the park is succeeding or failing, effecting billions of dollars in revenue. Space indigenization is interrelated to labor indigenization in that workers absorb the affirmative or toxic milieu of the work environment affecting their performances.

The theme is the indigenization of labor is how the park addresses or changes to fit its international workforce. I argue that the transnational dimensions of Disney complicate the issues of labor indigenization because different national groups be they

American, Hong Kongese, mainland Chinese, or Filipino are treated unevenly. On a global comparative scale some Hong Kong workers enjoy more privileges over undeveloped southeast country workers. Although Hong Kong Disneyland employees come from many parts of the world, the executives are primarily American-British, while the park's workforce is largely comprised of Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese and Filipino employees. The transnational workers add another layer to complicate this arrangement, and they have different job expectations. For example, some Hong Kong residents may feel that labor indigenization means offering employment to mainly local residents. "The general expectations of the local Hong Kong population were that there would be local employment at the theme park, and that the theme park would generate much-needed revenue." (Fung and Lee 2010) In fact, the opposite has turned out to be the case; the *South China Morning Post* has published many articles about labor abuse allegations at the park and the park's loss of millions of dollars of revenue. (Eng 2009 and Landler 1999). The Hong Kong government ultimately made the decision to build the park, but did not fully take into consideration the fact that Disney would be hiring not just a local, but a full transnational labor force. In my interviews in both California and Hong Kong, I found that the Hong Kong Disneyland employees did not revere Disneyland as much as many of the Anaheim employees did. It was just another job for the Hong Kong Disneyland employees, and they were not eager to employ the kind of Disney emotional labor that some American Disney employees did (Oral History 2009). The Disney theme park culture of labor (especially in the U.S.A.) relies on emotional labor such as constant smiling, solicitation, and scripted demeanors (Bryman 2004). I define labor

indigenization as the process or intent to employ primarily local residents of Hong Kong and fit the Disney ethos into Hong Kong work norms. I argue that labor indigenization at Hong Kong Disneyland is problematic for several reasons. First, the labor force leadership at Hong Kong Disneyland is from Burbank, California and there has been a lot of turnover of the original Hong Kong Disney setup crew, so institutional memory has been lost (Oral History 2009). There are also on-going allegations of unequal treatment of employees based upon ethnic and national lines. Second, Disney is trying to promote and implement the emotional labor model, which Hong Kong workers will not do. (Choi 2012) Additionally, the international workforce at the park makes having one type of work protocol difficult. The Disney model is incompatible with some Hong Kong workers and consumers. Third, in my interviews with Hong Kong Disney Filipino dancers, they related that they were not treated equally in terms of work assignments as compared to their American and Chinese dance counterparts. Some of them had responded with resistance to this treatment by quitting (Scott 1987).

The third large theme of my research is understanding and making visible the indigenization process of consumption and marketing to show how the park markets itself to fit its clientele's tastes. Clear tensions emerged when Disneyland and Hong Kong came together in a business venture (Choy 2011). Some of the lasting tensions I observed involved the nature of the economic deal between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Disney Corporation, in which the government of Hong Kong financed 90% of the project but received only 57% of the ownership (Eng 2006). Much of the criticism from citizens and politicians has involved charges of "cultural

insensitivities” of a western company coming into Hong Kong. According to Conrad Kottak (2008), indigenization (and conflicts) occurs when a force from a world center such as the United States via Disneyland enters new societies such as Hong Kong, China.

To understand culture change, it is important to recognize that meaning may be locally manufactured. People assign their own meanings and value to the texts, messages, and products they receive. Those meanings reflect their cultural backgrounds and experiences. When forces from world centers enter new societies, they are indigenized- modified to fit the local culture. This is true of cultural forces as different as fast food, music, housing styles, science, terrorism, celebrations, and political ideas and institutions (Appadurai, 1990 cited in Kottak, 2008).

The above quote directly applies to my study of modifications that an American transnational theme park has to undertake to succeed in a new cultural environment. I initiated this study by asking whether Hong Kong Disneyland was *good* for the people of Hong Kong. The story seemed a simple East–West cultural conflict. I quickly found that “good” and “bad” could not quantify the ambivalence, anger, and anxiety that this park provoked among the Hong Kong residents that I interviewed. There were also the sentiments of hope, desire, and expectation toward this park by the Hong Kong residents. I was further interested in how an American park could change (or indigenize) to “fit” a Chinese audience that had varying knowledge of Disney. Both parties, Disneyland Incorporated and Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region), had their own social-economic challenges to overcome long before they met as partners.

One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that the Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) indigenization project that Disney and the Hong Kong government undertook as a joint venture has produced uneven results for both parties. Disney made a fair attempt to indigenize the space by following the precepts of *feng shui* which is an ancient Chinese placement of buildings and housing in order to achieve peace, prosperity and good luck. Local Hong Kong residents do not appreciate this because of culture, ethnic, and class disputes among different Chinese publics. Additionally Hong Kong residents have lingering sentiments of governmental distrust but also are very aware of the intense bad publicity, and revenue loss.

In terms of consumption, the indigenization of the food at Hong Kong Disneyland was not fully effective, as the Disney food cannot compare to the variety, quality, and low cost of local Cantonese food alternatives. The indigenization of marketing failed because it presupposed a deep Disney knowledge that many Mainland Chinese and lower-income or elderly Hong Kong residents just did not possess. By contrast, I explore the success of the indigenous rival theme park, Ocean Marine Park (OP) and how/why local Hong Kong residents revered it. In fact, nostalgia for the park has increased since the arrival of Hong Kong Disneyland. I argue that Ocean Marine Park in Hong Kong is effective at attending to Hong Kong resident needs because of exemplary executives, a quick-responding local board of directors, and a particularly deep knowledge of local Hong Kong Cantonese culture and international tourists.

Disney Indigenization Studies: A vast amount of contemporary academic and non-academic Disney literature focuses on “front stage” (what you can see), “backstage” (what you can not see), and “offstage” (production and intellectual development) issues (Raz 1999, Ross 2000, Landler 2001, Foglesong 2003, Giroux 2001 et al). Many “front stage” books focus on Disney animation, history, architecture, tourism, travel guides and biographies.¹ Among the most notable works is anthropologist Stephen M. Fjellman's *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (1992). Fjellman exhaustively discusses every ride and attraction and analyzes the prevailing consumerist underbelly of the organization. He argues that Disney “pursues its own economic interests, acts as the muse for the allied transnational corporations that sponsor it as well as for the world of late capitalism, where the commodity form has colonized much of human life.” (Fjellman 1992)

There is “backstage” Disney literature on labor abuses, (Koenig 1995; Human Rights Watch 2008). There are many sweatshop abuse claims against Disney factories in mainland China (SACOM 2008). In Hong Kong Disneyland there have been protests by Disney construction workers who said they were not being adequately paid for their work. The workers picketed outside the park, which was a public relations fiasco. There is a plethora of “off stage” literature on the subliminal effect these consumerist messages are having on children. Henry A. Giroux, in particular, has explored Disney’s effect on children. He argues that, while Disney may seem innocent to families, in fact their corporate goal is to create children who are “producing

consuming objects” (i). Giroux argues that Disney is also “legitimatizing ideological positions that are deeply conservative....”(i). Disney depictions of gender, and family are usually Anglo and hetero-normative. Males are depicted as the hero and women are depicted as objects with no agency. (See Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast) There are “off stage” claims about Disney in that the corporation is aggressively pro-capitalistic, spreading this ideology into Chile and other parts of the world. In *How to Read Donald Duck* Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart (1984) argue that in Chile Disney cartoons are culturally imperialist. (Dorfman and Mattelart 1984) For example, cartoon vultures representing Hegel and Marx are depicted as savage “guys who are immune to the voice of conscience.” (Chile Monitor 1974 *quoted* Dorfman and Mattelart: 13). Hong Kong is very capitalistic place and would seem the most hospitable place to develop a new theme park.

By contrast, two books on indigenization at Paris (*née* Euro) and Tokyo Disneyland, Aviad E. Raz's (1999) and Andrew Lainsbury's (2000), challenge the view that the parks are merely examples of American imperialism. Raz (1999) contends that the Japanese colonized Disney and adapted it to suit their own cultural purposes. Lainsbury (2000) relates how Euro Disneyland had to serve wine, sell gaudy merchandise, and assuage its labor force to become more successful. This study complements the above studies and contributes to the anthropology of globalization and postcolonial studies in that it looks at the former British colony Hong Kong and the American globalizing effects of Disney. My study fits in this literature on large state and popular culture projects and how they affect thousands of Hong Kong community

members, and international and local workers. It reveals how complex transnational labor relations, competing local theme park, and intra-cultural conflicts complicate the process of indigenization.

Indigenization Theory and Successful Hong Kong Corporate Americanization

Conrad Philip Kottak (2008: 375) defines *indigenization* “as modifications made to fit local culture.” Hong Kong Disneyland made an intentional attempt to adapt to the local Cantonese culture in myriad ways, including the sale of local foods, the choice of dress and costumes, and the arrangement of the park's buildings. They wanted to avoid the pitfalls, charges of cultural imperialism of Paris Disney *née* Euro Disneyland. There are a plethora of examples of successful indigenization efforts of Western corporations into Chinese environments such as McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Shakeys Pizza , Pizza Hunt and 7/11 convenience stores . George Ritzer (1993) has argued that these corporations represent American homogenization, which he terms “McDonaldization.” *Golden Arches East* (1997), edited by James Watson, complicates this McDonaldization theory by stating that locals make these corporate eating establishments, such as McDonald’s their own. Yunxiang Yan, researching McDonalds in Mainland China, argues that there "is a new tendency to absorb foreign cultural influences and transform them into local institutions.” (Yan 1997) Yan attributes China’s full embrace of McDonald’s to its insatiable taste for Western products: “Big Mac becomes a symbol for Americana” (Yan 1997). The Chinese *like* the fact that some McDonald’s food is homogenized, limited, and equal. This standardization makes it a

place of equality and democracy in comparison to local cuisine. The menu is indigenized in Mainland China by offering a more Asian slate of sauces, drinks and meals. For example, you can eat a delicious McDonalds red bean or taro pie. There is an interesting dialogue here between Kottak's indigenization practices and a global corporate power being adopted by people in a locale as a symbol of globalization and power. James Watson notes that in 1975 McDonalds opened in Hong Kong and was a raving success. "Seven of the busiest 10 McDonalds are located in Hong Kong" (Watson 1998:78). McDonalds in Hong Kong is successful because it appeals to children and parents. McDonalds brought in a new sanitation and queue standard while it also gave children a place to play. Today, some working class Hong Kong residents have their wedding receptions there. Hong Kong residents have embraced American fast food but have not lost their local culture. Other popular Western corporations have all made deep inroads into Hong Kong Chinese food culture by adapting to local tastes. Most of these stores are locally Hong Kong resident owned franchises, which carry local flavors and ingredients along with cuisine that can be characterized as "fusion." These globalized corporate food restaurants in Hong Kong cannot be defined as blind Americanization or homogenization as locals have made it their own.

Globalization does not imply homogenization or Americanization, and to the extent that different societies appropriate the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories, and languages." (Appadurai 1996: 17)

There are positive examples of Japanese indigenization of toys in the United States. Anne Allison's (2006) *Millennium Monsters* recounts how the Japanese children's cartoons and live action television shows Pokémon and Power Rangers "took over" 1990s America. *Power Rangers* was indigenized in the United States by filming the opening shot at the Griffith Park Observatory in Los Angeles, redubbing it in English, replacing the speaking roles with American teenagers (Allison 2006). Beyond the dubbing into English and changing of some of the character names, *Pokémon* was relatively unchanged. This is another example of how the process of indigenization is not just about cultural imperialism or homogenization.

Hong Kong Disneyland Indigenization Literature

Here I would like to complicate the notion that to indigenize successfully you have to make money. I argue it is possible to do well financially and succeed in terms of business/global capital but at the same time fail *culturally*. Hong Kong Disneyland was not an initial success as it suffered from low attendance and a lack of local support and failed to turn a profit, but it has since increased its attendance in some avenues. Some authors argue that it is now "successful," but I would like to redefine success as local community acceptance and patronage. Under this definition, Disney is not fully successful to local Hong Kong residents who continue to not attend in droves. In my study, a majority of the locals commented that they felt the park was built under an unfair agreement between Hong Kong government and the Disney Corporation. Some of my

informants said that Disney did not take enough care to adapt or indigenize to the local customs of Hong Kong SAR.

I think some of the problem, not just with Disney but with many American businesses is that, because of a sort of arrogance built on their success, they just ‘air drop’ their culture/business models into another country and then are surprised when it doesn’t take off the same way it did in the United States. Like dropping a potted plant and being surprised it doesn’t take root. You can drop seeds, but the soil, sunshine, water, and nourishment need to be in place for a seed to take root and grow. Disney is culture and Walt wanted to create an image of aspirational America that does not always translate. Maybe his original vision doesn’t even hold up in the U.S. post 60s cynicism, but whatever the message of the Disney brand today, it doesn’t have a “direct translation” into this [Hong Kong] culture and there was not enough care taken to help make it something that could feel organic and retain its personality. The soil is different here and it feels like it is stuck in its pot. We [Hong Kong residents] have different conditions. We have typhoons and humidity.[sic] Not sure it [Hong Kong Disneyland] can survive in these conditions without roots here somehow. (Local Hong Kong Educator Oral History: 7-7-10)

While I was in my fieldwork, I did not encounter local Hong Kong residents who had glowing reviews of the park. If one merely looks at the revenue stream you cannot see the local reactions. John Matusitz (2009) argues that Hong Kong Disneyland has become successful because it 1) lowered prices, 2) adapted to local community visitors, 3) changed its décor, and 4) changed its labor practices. Matusitz argues the increased attendance and revenue measures denote success. Matusitz is, in some economic sense, correct: According to Walt Disney Company executives, Hong Kong Disneyland received 35% more visitors from the mainland China and 80% more Indian visitors

between April and June 2010 than it had during the same period the preceding year (South China Morning Post-SCMP 2010). But how do local Hong Kong residents, scholars, and unions feel? Local scholars and organizations, such as Sunny Lam (2010) Kimburly Choi (2011), John Ap (2007) and the Hong Kong Disneyland Cast members union disagree, however, with the notion that Hong Kong Disneyland is a totally successful globalization or glocalization enterprise. My own interviews with local Hong Kong residents and Disney staff show that they only partially agree with some aspects of Hong Kong Disneyland success. A pillar of Matusitz's argument is Hong Kong Disneyland's increased revenue, but that does not take into consideration local Hong Kong residents negative and ambivalent judgments. Ap (2007) study shows that Hong Kong residents are still ambivalent and distrustful of the park. Choi (2011) argues that the workers and locals consume the park space in a way that Disney cannot manage or approve of.

Theme parks, like Disney are often places for the wealthy tourist elite while local residents rarely can afford it. Hong Kong Disneyland, like other cultural sites is a contested space between many groups (McDonogh, 1992; Kuper, 1972; Gregory, 1998). It is also a transnational spaces (Appadurai, 1996, Bestor, 2001; Gupta, 1992; Ong, 2006). There is a lot of anthropological studies on public urban space and how they can be places of exclusion for certain groups such as males, minorities, and working classes (Caldaria, 2001; Gregory, 1992; Susser, 1993) and Hong Kong Disneyland seems to alienate some portion of Hong Kong local population. To understand Hong Kong

Disneyland one must understand the two partners of (Hong Kong SAR government and Disney Incorporated) and the issues that they brought to the table.

History of Two Embattled Entities

In 2005 the Capitalistic Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong, part of the Communist nation of China, imported and bought 53% of ownership in the ultimate piece of Americana – The Walt Disney Company, the world’s largest media company and theme-park operator. (HKDL Annual Review Report 2011, Choi, 2012). Disney is one of the most powerful corporations in the world. The United States, along with dozens of other countries, are positively, negatively, and ambivalently being changed by the Disney Corporation and this needs further research attention (Lainsbury 2000, Raz 1999, Wasko 2001, Giroux 2010, Ross 2001 et al). Hong Kong officially ceased to be a colony of Great Britain in 1997. In anticipation of the handover to Mainland China, many local Hong Kong locals left the island for other countries including the United States, Canada, and Australia. One of the results of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States it that is decreased significant international travel which effect the tourist driven economy of Hong Kong. The Asian financial crisis of 1998 also affected the Hong Kong economy. The Bird Flu crisis and SARS (Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome) also placed Hong Kong in the international media as site of disease negatively effecting Hong Kong tourism. Huang (2000) argues that, “From its days as a British empire colony to its current status as China’s Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong’s urban space has been continuously redrawn by

globalization.” (p. 385) A lot of capital was flowing out of Hong Kong during this time along with an increasing unemployment rate. All of these events combined were economically devastating to the Hong Kong government and local people. Hong Kong was looking for an opportunity to turn itself around economically as was the Disneyland Corporation.

A plan to build a Shanghai Disneyland was scrapped for political reasons. Euro Disneyland, now called Disneyland Paris, was a political, cultural, and economic disappointment in that projected attendance and profits were not met. (Lainsbury 2000) As a consequence, Disney was looking to re-invigorate its international theme parks offerings. Hong Kong appeared to be the right opportunity at the time. The Hong Kong Disney theme park and economic partnership was touted as a potential savior of both Hong Kong and Disneyland Incorporated. But the deal was inequitable from the start. Controversially, the Hong Kong SAR paid 90% of the 5.4 billion dollar (USD) cost of infrastructure construction for the new park, but only secured a slight majority (57%) of shares in the project, with no executive privileges and no copyrights to merchandise (HKDL Annual Review Report 2011). As one of my informants asserted, “Disney laughingly told its Anaheim, California shareholders they got a free theme park!” (HKDL worker Interview 2010).

Needless to say, many Hong Kong students, scholars, activist groups, and local community members felt finagled by the Disney transnational corporation and questioned the economic benefits of its partnership with Hong Kong. Some parties in Hong Kong contend to this day that the money spent on the park could have gone to the

re-education of local displaced workers and other important social programs (SACOM interview 2010). From the 1950s through the 1980s, Hong Kong was considered one of the world's sweatshops, producing everything from plastic flowers to transistor radios (Louie 2001, Lee and Chui 1997). Much of this labor was performed by young women who sacrificed their youth and vitality working in the factories, helping to make Hong Kong the economic "tiger" it is now. ⁱMany of these female Hong Kong factory jobs have now been shipped to Mainland China (Lee 2001). By 2011, millions of the women who had worked in these sweatshops were middle-aged, jobless, and facing age employment discrimination. The government, instead of committing resources toward re-educating these women, invested in a global theme park to offer more jobs at the local level. These women were not qualified to apply for the jobs at Hong Kong Disneyland because they did not have the youth or the skills. Activist organizations such as SACOM (Scholars and Students against Corporate Mismanagement) and "Disney Hunters" have emerged to protest the unfair deal with what they term the "Rat." They asserted that the money should have been used to help more of Hong Kong's indigent citizens.

Hong Kong Disney opened in 2005 and was plagued by well-publicized public relations issues including multi-million dollar revenue losses, low attendance, and labor abuse allegations. This dissertation contends that the "Happiest Place on Earth", Hong Kong Disneyland, is an important locus for the broader culture conflict between Disney, Mainland China and the Hong Kong SAR. This conflict cannot be understood solely in the binary terms of East v. West; it also requires a nuanced understanding of the

longstanding intercultural conflict between Hong Kong locals and the Mainland Chinese. The Main Street USA simulacrum located in Hong Kong, China is not the idyllic Walt Disney United States bourgeois dream; rather, it is riddled with such everyday occurrences on the streets as random public urination, yelling, queue (or line) cutting, and according to interviews with workers and my own observations, employment inequality. The Walt Disney Company had to replace four out of five Hong Kong Disney CEOs in five years and dozens of employees have quit. They also had to fire the entire original marketing team. There are conflicts between the American executive controlled Hong Kong Disney and a Hong Kong public that feels duped by the unequal park contract. Hong Kong locals show resistance by not attending the park and Hong Kong Disneyland workers resist by quitting their jobs. Many Hong Kong community members, activists, and scholars question how this park benefits the people of Hong Kong who do not attend the park in large numbers but still pay for the park through taxation. Since the park opened, it has never made a profit nor achieved its attendance goals and until recently continued to lose a lot of money.¹

This ethnographic study contributes to social science and anthropology's objective of promoting cross-cultural interaction and mutual understanding by investigating, publicizing, and amplifying the issues of the community members and workers cross-culturally. The ethnography is "on the ground," articulated in understandable language and thus accessible to the broadest audience. This approach allows for the understanding of different anthropological perspectives around globalization and indigenization, labor relations on a global stage, international and

local, national, and international recreational or leisure markets. More specifically, this project responds to the basic queries: How does Disney indigenize or adapt to the people and city-state of Hong Kong? What are the tensions in that adaptation and in what spaces is that adaptation most and least visible? Finally, what, if any, are the positive and negative outcomes of the Disney-Hong Kong partnership for the local Hong Kong residents? I will be answering the following questions: Who goes to the park, what do they consume and why? How is the park marketed and to whom? How do the locals feel about the beloved rival local theme park, Ocean Park? How do local Chinese community members in Hong Kong feel about Disney as an iconic world brand and the presence of the park in particular? How, then, does Disney indigenize such things as food, space, and consumption patterns on the ground and in everyday life? How is the labor force at Disney Hong Kong structured? Is the staff local or international? How do the workers get along among themselves? How does the company treat them? And how do the people who come to the park as tourists treat each other?

Globalization, Popular Culture and State Projects

There were many social scientists who argued the pros and cons of both media and economic globalization issues (Huntington, 1961; Frank, 1961; Gereffi, 1980; McMichael, 1966; Friedman, 2005; Sklair et al., 1999). My dissertation interrogates how a popular culture and state project indigenizes to the local Hong Kong community, which is of critical importance to how this partnership affects the multiracial and multinational work force that Hong Kong Disney employs. The terms positive globalization must be

unpacked further and Christina Schwenkel's multivariate interpretations of war tourism sites are useful here. Schwenkel (2006) argues that space is often interpreted differently by different groups, which "complicate, expand, and often transcend dominant modes of historical representation in new and distinct ways" (5). Richard Handler and Eric Gable, (1997) in *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, also argue that frontline interpreters, corporate officials, service workers, and new progressive historians are changing the way Colonial Williamsburg is "displayed." For Hong Kong Disneyland this means that the frontline workers, who are primarily local Hong Kong residents, very much alter how the theme park is interpreted and consumed. Janet Wasko argues that theme parks are generally a "display" of some fantasy and, as it has been argued by Disneyland, is an idealized vision of itself displaying "Americana." Some Hong Kong people do not need fantasy, but instead need reality, veracity, and nature. This is very important because Ocean Marine Park, the local rival theme park provides actual flora and fauna (nature). So what is "Americana" doing on Asian soil? According to Edward Said, Orientalism has been used as a justification for colonialism in Asia with the ultimate goal, for example, of extracting material gains. This concept ties to my analysis in that some Hong Kong residents feel the theme park took too much of their taxpayers money to build without giving something back (Oral History 2010).

Local Hong Kong citizens also contend that the park was not created with local tastes in mind. According to Rey Chow's (1997) article, "King Kong in Hong Kong: Watching the 'Handover' from the U. S. A.," there were no riots in Hong Kong, but there

was a feeling of apprehension as the new “colonial“ power of communist China was taking over from the British in 1997, Kwame Nkrumah (1957), the first President of the newly independent West African country of Ghana, contended that this is not a new phenomenon, citing that even after the decolonization of Ghana, the economic engine of the country was still run by the colonizers, a condition he called *neocolonialism*. This relates to my study because some argue that Hong Kong Disneyland represents neocolonialism by the U.S. and Mainland China.

Globalization, Cultural, Postcolonial, China, and Anthropology Study Contributions

This study contributes to the fields of anthropology of globalization/localization, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, China studies, and popular culture, as well as to the broader public understanding of globalization, change, and the indigenization of external cultural icons in a myriad of ways. First, it focuses on how the global Disney labor hierarchy and its traditionally Western cultural expression through its theme parks can be altered, magnified, or neutralized when a government owns 53% of the theme park (HK Annual Report 2012). One main difference between the Chinese park and the U.S. Disney park is that Filipinos nationals (immigrant labor) tend to fill the roles of dancers and singers, which is a issue for the local Hong Kong citizens, who were promised jobs from the government by the creation of Hong Kong Disneyland. Furthermore, my research explores how shared corporate and governmental ownership affects these and other working conditions and unionizing attempts of a transnational labor force comprised of American, British, Filipino, Cantonese, and Mainland Chinese workers.

How does Disney react to the protests around abuse allegations by local Hong Kong students and scholars? Why are outside NGO groups such as “Disney Hunters” being formed and for what aim? How does Disney reply to its local employees who say that their transnational American counterparts are better treated? How do these labor issues compare to labor protests (or lack of) and organizing at the “local” Ocean Park?

Second, my research explores the different ways in which Hong Kong Disneyland has navigated Disney corporate culture and mainland Chinese culture. This includes an investigation of how Disney attempted to accommodate its predominantly mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong resident visitors. Initially, Hong Kong Disney underperformed in terms of attendance and local reviews. This research also investigates the ambivalent feelings that local Hong Kong Cantonese have over the newest Disney theme park, which is being built in Shanghai. This much larger park would likely cut into the attendance of Mainland Chinese at Hong Kong Disneyland.

Third, I investigate the cultural modifications in practices in the area of food, queue, and bathroom culture that Disney must employ in Hong Kong. What foods does Disney sell and how has it been indigenized for this park? For example, the selling of shark fin soup might be offensive to some American Disney visitors, but it is culturally appropriate for Hong Kong residents. Another big note of contention at the park is the lack of familiarity of Mainland Chinese with bathroom and queue (i.e., lining up) etiquette. Mainlander tourists have also jumped the gates and rioted to gain entry to the park when the park tickets were sold out. Meanwhile, some of the Hong Kong interviewees have been displeased that some Mainlanders cut lines to the different

attractions. They are also disgruntled that some Mainlanders urinate and spit in public, especially in light of the recent Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Bird Flu scares in Hong Kong. There have also been multiple protests over Disney's sweatshop labor violations by students and scholars (SACOM 2008). How have these protests been handled, both by Disney and the Hong Kong SAR government? There has been one former park employee suicide attempt and a Chinese New Year riot that garnered a lot of media attention. Most Americans do not think of these unpleasant issues when they think of the Walt Disneyland Corporation.

Methods

I visited Hong Kong, China on three separate occasions: the first for pre-fieldwork in 2007 (one month), the second in 2008 to attend the Beijing Olympics (two weeks), and finally for 14 continuous months (June, 2009 – September, 2010). I used various methods to conduct my research. I conducted oral histories, formal, and semi-formal multi-hour interviews. I also used ranked, open, and closed surveys. On a few rare occasions I was able to do phone interviews when my informants schedule did not allow us to meet in person. As part of Dr. Debra Weber's two-quarter Oral History class, I was able to distribute 22 surveys in Anaheim, California as well as conduct 8 full oral histories (US Disney Theorist, Anaheim community members, Disney union representative, Euro Disney Marketer, CA Disney management, CA Disney fans, CA Disney worker, Anaheim anti- Disney community groups and Disney workers). These oral histories were scored and transcribed. These interviews were also recorded on

Audacity and a CD copy was given back to the interviewers for their full approval. This made my research quite different from other local American Disney research or Hong Kong Disney research, as I had completed a lot of comparative research before I conducted the full 14-month fieldwork visit. I conducted surveys, oral histories, and interviews in Hong Kong during my 14 months of fieldwork in 2010. Specifically when I was in Hong Kong, I interviewed 14 males and 12 females. I also got 26 Hong Kong residents to fill out my surveys. The people I interviewed were, in some ways, parallel to people I interviewed in California. I interviewed a HKDL marketer, HKDL union official, HKDL workers and HKDL management. I also interviewed local residents of Hong Kong in a variety of different occupations and Ocean Park executives. The majority of the interviews were all recorded on two tape recorders and a Livescribe pen that also recorded the notes as a back-up mechanism. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 25 to 64 years old. These interviewees were all given pseudonyms to protect their identities even though some of the interviewees actually wanted their names to be made public. I interviewed Disney union organizers, activist groups, and Disney workers. Most of the workers were no longer employed with Hong Kong Disney. For those who were still employed at the park, and because of that, I had to change some descriptive facts to protect their identities. Additionally, I interviewed local community members and executives at both Disney and Ocean Marine Theme Park. I used structured and semi-structured interviews which were taped and transcribed. Most of my main data came from structured hour and a half interviews. I also visited the park bi-weekly to observe and take notes. I used participant observation, questionnaires, archival research, and

interviews to get at the “thick description” of my fieldwork (Geertz 1973, See Appendix).

I wrote over 400 pages of typed ethnographic notes and interview data. One of my goals was to record the process of how the park modified their food, attractions and rides to accommodate the new cultural environment of Hong Kong. Another goal of my research was to document and give voice to the community’s ambivalent reactions to the park, as this aspect was played down in the global media. My third goal was to understand the reasons why some Hong Kong Disney workers, specifically my Filipino dancer informants, were disgruntled with their treatment, which resulted in them leaving their jobs. My final goal was to note the cultural fissions and reactions to the differing queue, toilet, and sanitation culture dissonances and clashes expressed by certain visitors. My overall aim was for the broad American public and the global public to know how Hong Kong Chinese think and feel about Disneyland and the effects of Disney’s presence on their transnational corporations.

Globalization, Cultural Studies, and Indigenization Studies Connected to Disney

My contribution to the anthropology literature is in the areas of the anthropology of the state, labor and culture, and globalization. My research will also add new ethnographic analysis to the mass consumption debates in non-Western settings, in this case Hong Kong, SAR China. Furthermore, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s (1991) “Culture Industry” thesis, which states that popular mass cultural commodities are forms of mass deception, has not been adequately addressed in an Asian setting. My research tested this theory in Hong Kong, China SAR. (Special Administrative Region)

LAYOUT OF THE DISSERTATIO: The dissertation is divided into six parts. Chapter one introduces the research questions, methods, literature review and dissertation overview.

Chapter Two: Mao Meet Mickey

This chapter details the history of how Disneyland came to Hong Kong, China. Disney had originally planned to open a theme park in Shanghai, China. However, the relationship between Mainland China and Disney became strained following Disney's release of the controversial Martin Scorsese 1997 pro-Tibet film, *Kunden*. Consequently, negotiations over the theme park broke down. Enter the city-state of Hong Kong, which was in the midst of the perfect storm of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the 1997 decolonization of Hong Kong from the British, and the SARS (Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak. Hong Kong was desperately seeking an economic, political, and cultural panacea to solve its problems. Opening a Disney theme park in Hong Kong rather than Shanghai provided such an opportunity. This chapter looks at the contract between Disneyland and the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) government. It also explores Disney's new economic agreement to build a Shanghai Disneyland, which some argue will decimate Hong Kong Disneyland's attendance since it currently draws significantly from Mainland China. As a result of this new Shanghai agreement, some Hong Kong informants are fearful while employees do not think there is a threat. The chapter explores local Hong Kong media articles about how some Hong Kong politicians are unhappy over a deal they believe the government was duped into.

Chapter Three: Marketing Mickey: Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) has had a net loss of revenue every year since it opened in 2005 and continues to be in debt. In 2013 the park has reported a profit after 8 years of its opening. In its first year it fell 500,000 visitors short of the projected 5.6 million projected guests. This chapter will argue that some of the reasons that the park suffers low attendance can be attributed to miscues in marketing toward the disparate Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong Cantonese communities. Disney failed to adequately market to a population that possessed minimal knowledge of Disney's history and culture. There was not enough marketing to different types of Chinese local publics in terms that they understand or translate. My research informants felt that there were issues with marketing, such as it being primarily targeted to Mainland Chinese. For example, one mother felt alienated by discounted promotions during the Bird flu crisis, which she felt was irresponsible. Some of my informants had a lack of familiarity with fairytales that most Americans take for granted.

The initial marketing miscue was the “It’s a Small World” Commercial that used a bird’s eye view of a map was too vague for the Chinese visitor to understand. Here I mean that Disney had a television commercial of the park that showed the park’s buildings from a high aerial photo. The news media of past issues such as suicide attempts, labor abuse, riots, and protests were pushed fresh into the local community minds and became de facto negative marketing. In addition, many Hong Kong people are savvy international travelers who have been to other Disney parks and know that HKDL is very small in geography by comparison. The chapter also discusses the ways in

which some Hong Kong residents have had some conflicts with Mainland Chinese tourists.

Chapter Four: Mickey Vs. Whiskers: Comparing HKDL and Ocean Park (OP) Indigenous Reception and Accommodation

This chapter delineates and highlights the similarities and differences between Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) and Ocean Park (OP). It finds that Ocean Park has been more successful in addressing the local needs of Hong Kong citizens by successfully indigenizing/hybridizing global and local needs based in part on 30 years of operation in Hong Kong. Ocean Park also has a local expert board of directors and executives who understand and respect Hong Kong Cantonese culture. Chris Rojeck (1997) has a theory called indexical dragging which asserts that when tourists come to a site, such as the Eiffel Tower, they already bring a lot of knowledge of that place. For example they might positively or negatively remember the site from films, books, and television. This is problematic for Hong Kong Disneyland because there has been a plethora of negative media stories about the park. Ocean Park uses specifically positive *Hong Kong Cantonese* indexical dragging from Hong Kong culture, which Disney cannot employ in its marketing because of hard Disney forms. Hong Kong Disneyland, on the other hand, struggles with true indigenization due to a number of factors, including its ever-changing leadership primarily non-local decision-making ability, tourists' lack of knowledge of traditional Disney stories (cultural dissonance issues), non-transparency around operating numbers (financials), the perceived hubris of Disney, and extensive negative publicity.

Chapter Five: Indigenized Labor Complications: Hong Kong Labor History and Connection to Hong Kong Disneyland

This chapter examines labor indigenization at HKDL. It provides a snapshot of recent labor history that focuses on Hong Kong sweatshop garment factory female workers between 1950-1980's. It shows how this cheap labor source enabled Hong Kong to rise from a British colonial outpost to an internationally prominent economic power. When Mainland China first opened up to the West in 1978, many of these women's jobs transferred to Guangdong, China. As a result of these job losses, these female workers migrated out of Hong Kong. This history connects to the Disney project in Hong Kong in that it was developed as a means of employment for unemployed Hong Kong locals. This chapter provides an ethnographic account of the summary of the interviews that I conducted that highlight some of these issues. It will focus on the 3 local Hong Kong labor activists and 7 HKDL workers that were interviewed. It argues that the large transnational workforce at Hong Kong Disneyland complicates the achievement of true labor indigenization. Inequality in and resistance by the HKDL labor force will also be discussed.

Chapter Six: Feng Shui Space Indigenization: The Final Disney Frontier

Since Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) opened in 2005, there has been persistent negative publicity produced by the local media that highlights the cultural insensitivities of the Disney Corporation. This chapter presents a qualitative study of Hong Kong Disneyland that examines how the park has attempted to indigenize and adapt to the local

Chinese Cantonese community by using elements of feng shui, an ancient architectural method. The park utilized specific colors, numbers, and placement of buildings to achieve this. The thesis of this chapter is that there was a valid attempt by HKDL to indigenize local spaces in accordance with feng shui customs, *but* the basic form (or according to Arjun Appadurai (1996), the “hard cultural form”) of Disney space remains unchanged and/or not changed enough. Feng shui is an ancient Chinese placement system of buildings and objects to ensure good luck. I was able to identify the sites where cultural insensitivities overwhelmed attempts to reconcile the park's architecture (or layout) with the principles of feng shui. In the end, the attempts were not enough. This chapter documents the specific ways in which Disney tries to indigenize space and adds to the existing literature on the ways in which multinational corporations attempt to indigenize space in order to accommodate the local community. Drawing upon Homi Bhabha's work I argue that the direct copying or “mimicry” of the original Disneyland is intentionally subversive.

Conclusion: State and Popular Culture Projects

Recent media reports have asserted that Hong Kong is becoming a third world city because of its incessant pollution. Expatriates and locals alike who are leaving the city cite the polluted nature of the city as one of their primary reasons. The Beijing government is trying to help Hong Kong maintain itself financially on the one hand, while pushing other Mainland cities, such as Shanghai, to compete directly with the city-state on the other. How will Hong Kong Disneyland and local Hong Kong residents react

when Shanghai Disney is up and running? Currently, more than a third of the tourists that visit HKDL are from Mainland China. But why would they continue to come to HKDL when the Shanghai Disneyland is supposed to be four times the size? How will the Hong Kong community, whose government paid for the park, react? Will the park close down or will it work hard to rebound, just as Hong Kong has done in the past? There are yearly protests in Hong Kong for democracy by young activists called the post 80s demonstrators. The only mass protests against the Tiananmen Square incident in Mainland China also occur in Hong Kong.

This dissertation argues, among other things, that the HKDL indigenization project has produced a mixed bag of outcomes, the assessment of which depends on how it is perceived by the locals and the Disney workers. For example, in my interviews I show how the locals remain very ambivalent about the park and often cite the continuing negative narratives about the park's operation, the poor park service, and ongoing bad publicity as negatives. On the other hand, locals, visitors, and workers have received the indigenization of space, such as feng shui and the design of the HKDL hotels quite well. But, the ethnic and class based culture conflicts between Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong residents continue to mar the park-goers' experience for both groups. When all is said and done, Ocean Park, the local theme park competitor, remains the preferred park for the local Hong Kong people. The goal of Hong Kong Disneyland to indigenize labor to ensure that Hong Kong locals got the prime jobs has not materialized. Indeed, there are more Filipino nationals in comparison to local Hong Kong residents that are hired to become performers and dancers. My Filipino dancer informants complained that

they were treated unequally from the other Chinese and American dancers in that they had to dance more performances or “runs.” Lastly, it appears that HKDL’s attempts to indigenize the Disney food consumption patterns have failed primarily because of high prices, not being able to compete with Cantonese food, and the long wait-times for food. My Hong Kong interviewees have received the pending opening of Shanghai Disneyland very negatively while my HKDL worker informants do not perceive a viable threat.

Mao Meet Mickey

Snapshot Histories of Disney, Hong Kong & Hong Kong Disneyland

CHAPTER TWO

The immaculate ground is made out of asphalt. The turn of the century buildings look eerily new. There is the jingle-jangle of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese voices fighting to be heard, and off to the side is a six-year-old Mainland Chinese boy urinating into the bush shaped like Mickey Mouse.ⁱⁱ Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) workers or “cast members” run quickly to the child persuading the parents in faux Beijing accents (trying to promote ersatz Chinese solidarity) to stop their child’s behavior. A female Hong Kong resident, offended by this scene, starts to scream at the Mainland Chinese boy in ear-piercing Cantonese. The startled child looks up at the buildings that resemble an early 20th century simulacra of a New England town globally known as *Disney Main Street, USA*. Defeated by the humidity, the crowd gathers gazing up to see the Sleeping Beauty castle straight ahead beckoning everyone to move forward. The road in Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) is made to be like a reverse bildungsroman where grown-ups are encouraged to be youths yet again.

The above scene took place at the then newest global Disneyland in Hong Kong, China that opened in 2005. According to my research, however, the unfortunate fact is

that local Hong Kong residents do not want to be kids again, but are more focused on the million-dollar annual revenue losses of a theme park that their tax dollars primarily paid for. The interviews that I conducted show that Hong Kong residents are alternately livid, ambivalent, thrilled, and baffled that they possess no exclusive copy rights to the materials that all other global Disney parks have. The Hong Kong government also donated the entire space and development of that land for free for Disneyland. In the media, the repeated news reports of labor violations, cultural insensitivities, riots, and protests did not make HKDL seem like *the Happiest Place on Earth*. Naysayers claimed that the park continued to lose millions of dollars, was environmentally damaging, failed to make its attendance revenue projections, was culturally insensitive, and abused its labor-force. On the other side of this argument, those who believed in the soundness of the decision, pointed to the over twelve million visitors and the additional fifty thousand employment opportunities that the park brought to HK.

In order to fully understand the context that led up to the Disney situation, this chapter focuses on recent Hong Kong history as a backdrop to this momentous business dealing. HK's economic woes opened the door to the often secret and non-transparent dealings that the HK government had with Disney. Sussman (2010) argues that HK's global confidence was lowered after 1997 when many ex-pats and Hong Kong residents immigrated to other parts of the world. Tung Chee Hwa, then Hong Kong's top official Chief Executive and President of the Executive Council after the 1997 handover, endorsed an economic and political agreement to bring the Disney to revive the economy.

Recent China History Relating to Hong Kong: It is important to know the historical background of how Hong Kong became a colony of Britain. This might give insight into how mental colonization can have longer effects on the colonized people than just from the colonization period. (Fanon 2008, Sartre 1991, Cesaire 2001) Britain and Mainland China went to war over Opium and trading rights. China lost those wars and Hong Kong was ceded by China to Britain after they lost the first Opium War in 1842. Hong Kong was formally a British colony from 1842-1997. Britain had a “lease” for Hong Kong for 99 years until July 1997 when China took over the territory amid heavy social upheaval. Many Hong Kong residents were refugees from Communist Mainland China and had a negative perception of its political system.. Hong Kong was a bastion of capitalism for Britain during its colonialization period. When HK was taken back by China, it became part of the “One Country, Two Systems” political process which meant that HK would stay capitalistic and China, communist. In this agreement, Hong Kong would remain capitalistic for 50 additional years after the handover with no change. This is also linked to the fact that Hong Kong has never been self sufficient in terms of socio-political, economic, and geographic landmass.

HONG KONG HISTORY: How did Hong Kong Rise to become a global city?

Generally, Hong Kong flourished because of its “strategic position, its ‘flexible’ workforce, and a quick turn-around of desirable goods” (Chau, 1993; Sung, 1989). Eugene Anderson, however, argues that this was not the case. He said that HK flourished because its merchants had the good sense to invest in upgrading their products. In order

to understand Hong Kong's success, one must understand what it lacked. Hong Kong began as a series of barren sparsely populated islands that offered virtually no natural resources like minerals or oils. There was not an extensive amount of arable or grazing land for creating a large local food production and supply (EIU 1996-97). In the early 1800s, Hong Kong was inhabited mostly by subsistence farmers, fishermen, and SE Asian pirates (Flowerdew 1998).

This all worked well for the garment industry because of their fast changing fashions. 'Flexibility', economists have argued, 'is the competitive edge manifested by Hong Kong industries' (Chau 1993, Sung 1989). Another reason that Hong Kong accumulated capital was because of its reputation as a site that lacked political structure. Every year, a multitude of different businessmen from around the world do their buying and selling in Hong Kong with little governmental intervention. Sklair (2001) argued that this new class of people, the 'transnational capitalist class' (TCC), has the singular goal to advance global capitalism for profit. Transnational corporations are now deterritorialized and can take their capital to any destination (Sklair, 2001). Hong Kong became a perfect playground for the TCC. Hong Kong became even more important after 1950, when much of its trade with China was halted because of UN and US embargoes (The Columbia Encyclopedia: Sixth Edition, 2000). One cannot deny the power of Hong Kong female bootstrapping that elevated the tiny island into a world power.

Hong Kong developed a history during this time of being a financial entrepot and manufacturing center post WWII. When China opened its "bamboo curtain" in the

1980's all of its manufacturing jobs went to southern Mainland China. There was a shift during this time to tourism, luxury services and shopping for foreign tourists.

Nouveau riche Mainlanders started to trickle then flood into the island in the late 1990's to the ambivalence of Hong Kong residents. In 1997 the Asian financial crisis along with the integration with Mainland China also negatively effected Hong Kong tourism. After the September 11th, 2001 tragedy in the United States, long haul tourism to Hong Kong as well as international travel was lessened. This might also been due to the fact that one might travel directly to Mainland China instead of Hong Kong.

Tourism history: Labor Leaves Gaping Hole

The process of deindustrialization, marked by the drop of its share of Hong Kong's gross domestic product (GDP) from 22.3% in 1986, to 15.2% in 1991 (Tsang, 1998), is also evidenced by the 30% decline in the number of manufacturing jobs from 50,606 in 1988, to 33,863 in 1994 (Hong Kong Industry Department, 1994) and the elimination of close to 500,000 jobs between 1987 and 1995 (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 1988, 1996). As the manufacturing sector was declining, there was a parallel burgeoning of the service sector. Tourism and Service industries were rapidly taking the place of the garment industry in Hong Kong (EIU, 1996), but this was not without the costs earlier mentioned (Ho, 2001 & Leung, 2001). The printing and publishing industry did not leave the island for the People's Republic of China and continued to grow. Tourism and Service industries tended not to be full-time jobs or

offer any benefits such as healthcare. Overtime, illness, and worker accidents were also not covered in these newly developed industries. These jobs were also the ones to be eliminated first. In particular because of the perceived "advanced" average age of the female and male garment workers, training was a major issue. Even if the government annual reports on labor retraining programs state (EIU 2000) as one garment worker said, "there is no place you can retrain a 40 year old women to be 25 again." (Ho 2001:124). There was already unemployment and underemployment in the service sector, which was made worse by the financial crisis that swept Asia in 1998. The official 3.9 percent unemployment rate was the highest rate in 14 years (Ming Pao Daily News, 1998). With unemployment, wage levels in different sectors were also falling, while the number of vacancies had narrowed, causing further problems and severe economic hardship for the working class (Ho 2001:118).

There was also an attempt by Hong Kong to change from a reproduction site to an innovation one (EIU 1996-97). This required huge investments in the public and private economy, which Hong Kong had not yet made. Hong Kong needed to develop new technologies and manufacture that technology [to stay competitive] (Hallow & Dinot 2001).

HONG KONG HISTORY: Farewell Britain, Hello HK SAR (Special Administrative Region), China

In ten years after 1985, Hong Kong underwent the most rapid de-industrialization in any contemporary industrial society. As with the industrialization of Hong Kong which commenced in the 1950's, the main causes of de-industrialization lay outside Hong Kong... (Pang 2001: 110).

The British Empire returned Hong Kong to Mainland China in 1997 after its 100 year “lease” expired. From the 1950’s-1980’s, HK’s primary employer for both males and females was the garment industry (Greenwood 2001, Pui-tak 2001). During this period, the garment industry provided the majority of the world’s small radio transistors and apparel. Saskia Sassen (2001) stated that this development led HK to become a “global city” because it became an international hub for robust exchange. During the 1980’s, with the expectation of the reuniting of HK with China, many frightened HK people and business capital left HK. Many, however, did return later with foreign passports. (Sussman 2010) From the male and female laborer’s perspective, this was not good for them because most of these thousands of men and women were fired from their jobs when their factories moved to Mainland China. The subcontracting relationships between Hong Kong and the Mainland, for example, showed that the majority of subcontractors were linked to their Hong Kong contractors through preexisting social ties. (Leung, Chi-Kin, 272). Oral histories were collected about the HK women who moved to New York City where they continued to be employed in exploitative sweatshop work in even worse conditions. (Louie 2001)

International restructuring and the opening up of China was tied to increased unemployment rates because of capital flight out of Hong Kong. Additionally increasing competition with investors across the border in Guangzhou and Shenzhen created problems. With unemployment, wage levels in different sectors were also falling, while the number of vacancies had narrowed, causing further problems and severe economic hardship for the working class” (Ho: 118). In the 1980’s there was a lot of capital flight,

HK also experienced 2003 SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), 2008 Bird Flu, and the 1997 Asian financial crisis. This combination of huge problems put HK in a less than ideal global and regional space financially, politically, or economically. It was around this time that the Walt Disney Corporation brokered their deal with HK's state government.

History of Hong Kong: Decolonialization and Post-colonial HK Flight

Hong Kong residents have a long history of relationships with Mainland China. Many Hong Kong families fled from China into the island for refuge for a plethora of economic and social-political reasons. One thing that Hong Kong people and the Chinese from the Mainland vividly remember and memorialize is the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre where the government of China crushed student democrat protesters to death with tanks. As a memorial to the event, Hong Kong is the only city in the world that holds an annual protest to commemorate it. There was a lot of uncertainty before Hong Kong was returned back to Mainland China in 1997. One impact of the fear was that many Hong Kong citizens who could do so legally (or illegally) immigrated to Australia, the United States, and Canada. They often did this to get citizenship in those countries to hedge their bets. Here I mean that Hong Kong residents can stay in Hong Kong to work if the economy is good and they have no Mainland interference. They also can flee to another country such as Canada or the United States. Aiwa Ong refers to these individuals as "homo economicus" in her book, *Flexible Citizenship* (1999) because these elite HK Chinese buy different citizenships that benefit them the most economically.

HISTORY OF DISNEYLAND: In 1923 Walter & Roy Disney opened a very successful animation studio in California. Walt wanted to put the cinematic perspectives for guests to experience in the form of three dimensions (3D). He wanted to create a place that people could come to experience fun and this led to his idea of creating a theme park. The vision and ultimate physical manifestation of this theme park was based upon his memories of his midwestern childhood. He wanted to separate his theme park from the seedy carnivals and fairs that he attended as a youth. His theme park would be a sanitized place that had no alcohol or sleazy elements. The original Disneyland was opened in July 17, 1955 in Anaheim, California. Although it had a rocky start, the park went on to become spectacularly popular with locals and with guests all over the world. The success of the first Disneyland eventually led to the second park opening in Florida in 1971 Disney World. In 1983, the Disneyland Corporation opened its first international theme park located in Tokyo, Japan. It was followed by controversial Euro Disneyland which had many protests over cultural insensitivity claims at the park. The park was later renamed Paris Disneyland.

Disney History in China

Disney products and films have had an international presence in China since the 1930's with its black and white cartoons which were translated into various languages around the world (Fisher, 2005). The *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* film was shown in Shanghai, China in 1930 and was received positively. As a former British colony, Hong Kong received many of the items that were given to the British ex-patriot's as well

as its Chinese residents from China to make them feel more comfortable, including Disney entertainment. Today, Hong Kong has over 1,100 Disney corner stores outlets while Disney television programs and films are shown on Chinese television (Schuman & Ressler: July 19, 2005).

According to the September issue of the *Walt Disney newsletter* for “cast members.” Hong Kong was created as an exact replica of the original Anaheim, Ca theme park. The faithful recreation does have some modifications, for example it is much smaller in size. Many Europeans called the European Disneyland in France a form of cultural imperialism because it tries to lower French culture. (Lainsbury 2000). Euro Disney modified its park by adding beer and wine sales inside the park, but to no positive avail. There are other Disney theorists such as Aviad Raz who contended in his book, *Riding the Black Ship: Japan and Tokyo Disney* (1999) that the Western Disneyland did not appropriate Japan but the other way around. Japan took in the Western model and adjusted it to their particularly Japanese palates. For instance, they did not use the Snow White Castle as in other Disneyland’s, but chose instead the Cinderella Castle. Cinderella goes from a poor maiden to a princess by marrying a prince. Some see Cinderella as a self made princess since she was not royalty. This is because it goes with their myth of “pulling themselves by the bootstrap” after WWII (Raz 1999). All of these previous experiences with international Disney’s came into play when HKDL was being created.

Hong Kong Disneyland History: “It will accelerate our effort to become a world city in Asia and Disney puts a great emphasis in everything they do on quality, and obviously

they find this is something they find they can deliver in Hong Kong.” (South China Morning Post. November 3, 1999) Some might argue that Hong Kong is the enactment of Adam Smith’s dream of the “invisible hand” where there are no longer regulations but true capitalism. On one hand, Hong Kong has the highest inequality between the rich and poor in the world, but on the other, it does have some very important social welfare programs for the indigent. There are other theorists who would disagree with the benefits of capitalism (Amin, 2001, Marx, 1867-95). There were several reasons that Disney was attracted to Hong Kong and vice versa. Capitalism is indeed one of them. Another reason often cited in the media was that Disneyland would improve the Hong Kong international image that was so hobbled after its return back to Mainland China. Tung Chee Hwa, the then top Hong Kong governmental official touted the Disney project for bringing a myriad of things to the SAR: 1) moving HK out of thinking about traditional sources of wealth such as property 2) diversifying into Information Technology (IT), 3) improving HK’s global image, 4) making HK more economically competitive, 5) increasing HK’s efforts of becoming an Asia World City (*Majority Hail Project* by Wendy Shair and Sanna So Hong Kong Standard November 3, 1999.)

The theme park was supposed to bring in 100,000 direct and indirect new jobs to the SAR. The main pull factor for Disney was the promise of additional visitors that would come to HK and perhaps add an additional day to their holiday. And like Paris, Disney, Hong Kong Disneyland saw an unexpected conference business.

In *Obsolescent Capitalism* (2004), Samir Amin contended that global capitalism was on its last leg for everyone. There were ruptures everywhere, he contended and the people

suffering under capitalist rule would eventually overthrow that system. Hong Kong, SAR and Disney would be a great test case to see if either contention is correct. Disney is one of the biggest capitalist entities and corporate brands on the planet. Hong Kong was founded as, built and molded into a capitalistic laissez faire playground. This part of the chapter details the history of how Disneyland came to Hong Kong, China.

Talks of Disneyland coming to Hong Kong began in 1997 after the British government handed the Hong Kong Island back to Mainland China. The talks even included initial discussions of Disneyland possibly coming to Mainland China but that fell through because of political fallout about a Disney financed film critical of China. According to journalist Michael Schuman, Disney has had the occasional misstep in China. In 1996, Beijing blocked the company's films after Disney backed Martin Scorsese's film *Kundun*, which dramatized the life of the Dalai Lama and China's invasion of Tibet. The People's Republic of China considered Tibet an integral part of its country and heritage (Schuman 2005). After this incident, talks between Disney and government officials on the mainland fell through. Because China and Hong Kong followed two different economic-political frameworks- Communism on the mainland and Capitalism in the Hong Kong territories, Hong Kong was not directly under the Mainland's economic jurisdictions. Hong Kong was also much more Western and more accepting of political disagreements. The British has colonized Hong Kong for over 100 years. This is now changing in Mainland China with a growing segment of the population engaged in some sort of capitalistic pursuit. Although the doors were closed

for the Mainland, Hong Kong Island remained a viable option for Disneyland to open up a new theme park.

The park was built with 22.45 billion Hong Kong dollars, or \$2.88 billion (USD), in investments by the Hong Kong government. The government provided the land and built the road and rail links to it, although some of the road and rail costs might have been incurred even if the theme park had not been built. The government today owns 57 percent of the park, and Disney owns the rest. The government also holds subordinated shares that would convert to ordinary shares, raising the government's ownership as high as 75 percent, if the park does much better than originally envisioned. (Disney tailors Hong Kong park for cultural differences By Keith Bradsher: The New York Times: Wednesday, October 13, 2004)

There was also competition for the location of the new Disney theme park among many world cities and other Chinese states. In the case of Euro Disney, the company expertly pitted Paris against London and Spain. Eventually, with many public concessions that the Parisians still complained about afterward, the park went to France. A Disney marketer that I interviewed told me that the European park should have gone to Spain because of the very bad weather in Paris. So, it appeared that many factors contributed to the site selection for a theme park location. Frequently in these intense negotiations, Disney was able to obtain free or greatly reduced-priced government property, private land, transportation, and infrastructure. Disney knew how to play hardball. Hong Kong Disneyland, Shanghai Disneyland, Disneyworld in Florida, and Paris Disneyland all offered concessions to have the park in their countries. Tokyo

Disney bought the whole theme park like a franchise and pays licensing fees. And, at one point, Australia was also in the running, but they would not concede to Disney's demands for free or reduced priced lands, infrastructure and relaxed environmental regulations.

Unlike other places, however Hong Kong competed with both other countries and domestic cities; that is they competed with foreign Asian cities such as Singapore, Taipei, and Bangkok, and with domestic Chinese cities in the Mainland such as Hengqin Island in Zhuhai, Guilin, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Describing the resulting bidding as a "tussle," "war" and rivalry in the book *Consumption Analysis of Hong Kong and Guangzhou* (2002), Ben Adamo argues that the public is supposed to be involved in the decision making through the town (Wong 1999). Instead various professionals from different parts of the business center dominated the board. Because of this, the decision-making actually involved the view of *relatively wealthy businessmen* [my emphasis] instead of the general public. There can clearly be a difference in interest between the wants of the upper class and the wants of the lower class and middle class." (Adamo 2002: 8) How was the deal negotiated in this capitalist/communist environment? I will look at that in the next section, Disney Questionable Deal with Hong Kong, government.

Walt Disneyland Incorporated Questionable Deal With Hong Kong SAR Government

‘There is nothing wrong with Disneyland coming to Hong Kong as an investor,’ said David Tang, the founder of Shanghai Tang, an upscale boutique. ‘But do they require a subsidy of \$2.5 billion?’ (New York Times November 3, 1999)

“The city \$3.3 billion investment in the project is far more than Mickey’s \$320 million and has raised complaints that the government should not be putting funds in speculative venture.”(Washington Times, December 23, 1999) ⁱⁱⁱ

In the very beginning of the creation of Hong Kong Disneyland there were two central criticisms of the park; one was environmental and the other was about labor. One of the fears critics had was that Disney would create low quality jobs, but Disney responded that many technical jobs would be created. Another concern was that the location of the park would disturb the controversial Penny Bay ecosystem. Tim Choy (2011) in *Ecologies of Comparison* speaks to this issue. This will be discussed in greater depth in the chapters on Space and Labor. The Hong Kong Disneyland negotiations were non-transparent. Many of the details were only revealed to the public through the media when the deal was a *fait accompli*. In addition to \$417 million of equity, the government provided loans of \$1 billion to Disney and invested \$1.7 billion in capital projects such as land reclamation and building the new spur for the subway. Disney, on the other hand, put up \$371 million for its 43 percent equity stake and will earn management fees for running the show (Summary 3 Mouse of a different culture By Patrick Frater sept: 2005).

When the public discovered how the HK SAR government paid 90% of the fees and only got 57% of the stakes, many locals were incensed. Many believed that the “mouse” had duped them. Tokyo and Paris Disneyland received the full “exclusivity rights” that Hong Kong Disney did not receive. The environmental impact on Penny Bay was also controversial as well as the fact that all the feral dogs in the area were destroyed. There were other countries that were also courted by Disneyland but, in the end, those opportunities fell apart. For example, “in Australia, Disneyland asked the Queensland government to agree to a \$4 billion investment in infrastructure and tax breaks for the theme park there. Queensland refused.” (Johnstone 1999) ² There were newspaper articles that claimed that the majority of the Hong Kong populace approved of the project. With disparate quotes such as, “So far, no Disneyland in the world has been forced to close shop,” he said, “Building a Disneyland is still a better opportunity than building a casino in Hong Kong.” (Ibid 1999). There was also sentiment at that time that the government was weak in its negotiations. “We kind of faded out of the spotlight after 1997, and everyone wrote us off. This project tells the world that we are alive and kicking”, said Mike Rouse (New York Times, November 3, 1999). These quotes illustrate the disparate opinions of the park by the local Hong Kong government and residents.

² Johnstone, Helen. *Disney Optimism in Check*. Sunday Money; pg 3.

Opening Day September 12, 2005: Suicide, Labor Protests and offended Pop Stars

At the opening ceremony Monday, Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang said that Disneyland marked ‘a new chapter in tourism for Hong Kong - a chapter in which Hong Kong becomes a premium family-oriented destination in the long term, it will bring in billions of dollars of economic benefit.’ (Newsweek:September 2005)

After six years of planning and construction, with 600 Hong Kong government officials, visiting PRC Vice President Zeng Qinghong, 900 members of the international and local press and hundreds of local VIPs (local tycoons, corporate bigwigs and stage and screen stars) were in attendance for the grand opening ceremony, Hong Kong Disneyland officially opened its doors to the public at 1 pm on September 12, 2005. This was an international event and locals were quite excited about the opening of the park. On September 2005, Newsweek’s headline read, ‘Hong Kong Disneyland was marred by public relations debacles that left Mickey Mouse looking like Cinderella's stepmother in this former British colony.’ According to Newsweek, in the days up to and after the opening, many negative occurrences happened. The Hong Kong governmental officials criticized the park. Local Canto-pop stars like Kelly Chen reported that they were mistreated and disrespected by Disney officials. Local Hong Kong residents were not impressed by the extremely small size of the park or the long lines to wait in for the rides. There were also many allegations of labor abuse for both the workers who built the park and those who worked in the park. [See Consumption and Labor chapters] Additionally, a former Hong Kong Disney employee threatened to commit suicide on an attraction.

The park was marketed as a panacea to Hong Kong recent economic woes with promises of an estimated 5.6 million yearly tourists. The park fees were slightly less than

Tokyo Disneyland's and more equivalent to the U.S. Disneyland prices. The big difference, of course, was that it was only 10% the size of the U.S. Disneyland. It was also quite smaller than the Tokyo Disneyland. The fees were comparably much higher than the local Ocean Park, which was over two times as large and offered real marine animals. For many savvy Hong Kong people who were price conscious, this did not go unnoticed.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter reviewed the history of Hong Kong Disneyland and a brief historical context of Hong Kong labor. It also summarized the history of Disneyland and its international operations. Hong Kong was not doing well economically and Disney Incorporated was floundering in its European branch in Paris, France. This was when the agreement was made to create a Disneyland in Hong Kong. Because Hong Kong was in a worse position economically (high unemployment) and socially (fear of Mainland China) with the return back to Mainland China in 1997, it did not fare as well in the park negotiations. HK paid 90% of the infrastructure for the park and only received 53% of the ownership. HK also gave all the land and transportation costs for the park for free. I argued that this was an uneven agreement, with HK being on the losing side.

Consuming and Marketing Mickey

Ethnic, Class, and Culture Issues

CHAPTER THREE

Upon entering Hong Kong, Disney was faced with the challenge of integrating its well-established corporate culture into a new, complex cultural environment. Disney's pursuit of this integration has produced a mixture of marketing and consumption successes and misfires that I will highlight in this chapter. There are portions of Hong Kong residents that have visited many Disneyland's and know that their Disneyland is quite geographically small in comparison. My Hong Kong resident informants are not duped by the culture industry a la Disney to consume products mindlessly; thus Hong Kong residents show some resistance to these tactics by avoiding the park, speaking ill of it, and directly protesting it. This chapter illustrates the marketing and consumption successes of Disney such as: new digital formats, collecting survey data, the use of trilingual formats, using local executive management, and building first-rate hotels. These successes do not negate the various negative marketing and consumption issues, which involve: problematic food choices, high costs, Chinese public disputes, an ethnocentric lack of Hong Kong cultural items in the park, and de facto negative marketing from damaging media stories. Japanese (Kawaii) and Korean (Hallyu) popular culture is also

more popular in Hong Kong and is indirectly in competition with Disney cultural products. I develop a nuanced approach to the literature on marketing and consumption by demonstrating that issues of cultural marketing are not just black and white, East vs. West, simplistic culture clashes. Rather, I foreground the important interethnic Chinese culture clashes, that are partially based on ethnic and class differences, that often play out at the park. The significance of these Chinese interethnic cultural quarrels is not adequately recognized by Hong Kong Disneyland, and therefore Disney Incorporated bears some of the blame for the fact that neither local or mainland Chinese have participated in the full positive Hong Kong Disneyland experience.

Drawing from the anthropology of marketing literature, this chapter analyzes Disney's marketing and consumption strategies in Hong Kong Disneyland. Hong Kong Disneyland was built around a Euro-American, heteronormative notion of a nuclear family. However, there are many different types of families and sexualities in Hong Kong such as a large number of childfree individuals and couples. Although the park's marketers knew that a large portion of Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese did not have deep, generational familiarity with Disneyland, they failed to recognize the extent of this lack of familiarity. Such ignorance limited Hong Kong Disneyland's success in implementing their marketing and consumption strategies. Additionally this chapter contends that Disney continues to struggle to meet the different consumption patterns and tastes of Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents because they are not differentiating marketing campaigns for individual ethnic Chinese publics and tourists.

MARKETING MICKEY: Hong Kong Disneyland has utilized a variety of successful and problematic marketing techniques in both Hong Kong and Mainland China. For Hong Kong Disneyland marketing to succeed, its marketing must understand local knowledge, history, and visitor wants. The very successful Tokyo Disney marketed itself as 100% American while actually being quite Japanese in many of its offerings (Raz 1999). Euro Disneyland over many cries of “cultural imperialism” remarketed itself as Paris Disneyland offering more local food products (Lainsbury 2000). To avoid the French park misfires Hong Kong Disney extensively studied the local community needs by having both focus groups and questionnaires. Even before the park opened, Disney researched the local knowledge of Disney's characters and products and found that it was not as robust as it in the United States (Tourism Expert Oral History 2008). Roy Tan Hardy, Vice President of Marketing and Sales of Hong Kong Disneyland has stated that extensive surveys of Hong Kong residents indicated that they preferred the classic Disneyland park. The classic Anaheim Disney park is smaller than Disney World (Orlando Florida), Tokyo Disney and Paris nee’ Euro Disney. In 2003 Disney began its push to market Hong Kong Disneyland to the Hong Kong community via many avenues. For example, director of marketing Jennifer Chua, said that they employed Disney television programming on Hong Kong TVB Jade channel (Dembina 2005). In addition, there were animated shows and three mini documentaries on the history of Disney theme parks that were used to help educate people about the Disney brand.

This extensive marketing was done to be multivariate and to dispel negative myths of Hong Kong Island. For example, Hong Kong Disneyland was linked to the

image of Hong Kong Island which had endured the global pandemic diseases such as Avian Flu and SARS a few years earlier. Sum and So (2008) note that Hong Kong Island had transformed from an image of “play” into a site of “fear and disease”. Some might argue that the original marketing team could not market the theme park to its full potential because of some of these issues. Many of my informants commented that they thought the marketing and public relations of the park was very poor. One Hong Kong Disney community relations’ worker said that the company made effective community partnerships. One person I interviewed, perhaps exaggerating a little, said the Disney marketers came in the morning and were fired by the afternoon (Oral History Hong Kong Disneyland Negotiator 2008). Indeed many Kong Disneyland marketers were dismissed from their jobs. The larger point is that the HKDL marketing abounds with successes and failures for many reasons. This next section will go over the miscues in marketing that Disney did not anticipate or address in a timely matter.

MISCUES IN MARKETING

Its [Hong Kong Disneyland] image is not too good. Its labor is not fair, but I heard they work long hours. [sic]The PR [Public Relations] tactics are very poor. Sometimes the bad image -- it is quite well known. I still have this image. [They] promoted a special offer during Swine Flu peak period. They try to increase entrance fee, and this is not good marketing. Their negative news is too much—long working hours, low salary, poor welfare. Most likely they employ part-time workers to wear thick clothes—to dress [in those costumes]. I think they should not promote the special offer during swine flu for the children. The Government stopped it. (Oral History with Hong Kong Mother: 2008)

De facto Public relations Marketing: Past Instances of Suicide Attempts, Riots, Protests

Since Hong Kong Disneyland opened, labor issues have been at the core of many negative public relations issues. *USA Today* reported that Hong Kong Disneyland workers are forced to wear thick, suffocating costumes and are not provided adequate breaks from work. The Hong Kong Disney contract builders also complained and protested that they were underpaid and abused. Another former Disney worker tried to commit suicide at the park. This coupled with the Lunar New Year riot and vocal claims of sweatshop labor abuse in the Disney mainland Chinese factories was de facto negative marketing. SACOM (Students and Scholar's Against Corporate Mismanagement) Disney Hunters, and other social justice activist organizations have publicized the levels of abuse at the Disney factories in the Mainland China press. (SACOM See Wide Spread Labour Abuses at Disney and Mattel Factories: January 7, 2013). These groups are often quoted in newspaper articles reporting that Disney products are manufactured in severe abusive work conditions. Disney Hunters' protests, which have been held both inside and outside the HKDL, have raised awareness of Disney local abuses in Hong Kong. The plethora of negative publicity about Disney's broader (and local) labor violations has directly overlapped and transferred to Hong Kong Disneyland. The silent and slow response to negative publicity about Hong Kong Disneyland has contributed to its overall negative public relations and marketing image.

Marketing Miscues: Problematic "It's a Small World" Commercial and Bird's Eye Map

The marketing of Disneyland in Mainland China started out with a few cartoon programs in Mandarin. One of the initial live action commercials, titled “It’s a Small World” (2005), opens with a bird’s-eye view of a map directing people to Hong Kong Disneyland. The commercial was intended to entice Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents to visit Hong Kong Disneyland. However, the initial map gave no clues regarding what is actually inside the park, how to enjoy the park, or why the park is a worthy place to visit in general. Furthermore, the advertisement does not take into account the different cultural backgrounds of the Chinese, who speak over two hundred dialects and are comprised of diverse subcultures and minority groups. The “It’s a Small World” (2005) commercial starts with a Mandarin rap that awkwardly transitions into a duet by two young women singing in Cantonese. These two musical styles are oddly juxtaposed together in one commercial. This seems an odd choice, as rap is not the most dominant musical medium in Hong Kong or Mainland China. Was this commercial supposed to convey America by using the genre rap music?

Most importantly, advertisements like this fail to recognize the fact that Mainland Chinese, especially the adult and elderly populations, have little direct contact with Disney products (even though there are illegal, Disney-like theme parks that appropriate Disney characters without authorization from Disneyland Incorporated). In China there are theme parks and housing neighborhoods that “mimic” other global places (Bosker 2013). When I asked one interviewee who was in his 60’s whether he knew a lot about Disney, he responded that they did not know it robustly. He further told me that Disney

was not his generation and his kids preferred Harry Potter, and Korean and Japanese popular culture more.

Marketing strategies like the “It’s a Small World” commercial (2005) also failed to recognize some important cultural differences between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents. Hong Kong’s history as a British colony created political and legal systems that differed from those in Mainland China. For example, some Hong Kong residents contend that their legal system is transparent and more advanced than Mainland China’s. The banking, political, and education systems are also more highly developed and internationally linked than they are in Mainland China. Developing a marketing campaign for the specific Hong Kong population should have involved strategies quite different than those that would have been appropriate for potential Mainland visitors.

Shanghai Disneyland & Ocean Park Marketing Damages Hong Kong Disneyland

Hong Kong Disneyland’s marketing missteps loom larger as Hong Kong will soon lose its monopoly on the Disneyland experience in China. Specifically, the new Shanghai Disneyland may pose a serious threat to Hong Kong Disneyland given the fact that it will be 5 times larger in size and easier for Mainland Chinese to access. The on-going marketing of the new Shanghai Disney park angered a lot of my Hong Kong informants. They felt that HKDL would fail if the mainland Chinese park opened. “While the investment was thought of to bring the nation fame to compete with other global cities, [to create] foreign investment, diverse jobs for its people, and essentially a flow of

money, Hong Kong Disneyland has been mostly a negative venture” (Choi 2011). This quotation from Kimburly Choi, a local Hong Kong academic, captures the frustration that some Hong Kong residents that have felt with the opening of Shanghai Disneyland which would negatively impact the Hong Kong branch. As a tour guide in the Mainland Chinese city of Guilin told me, “Chinese people are cost-conscious and given the choice to go to Hong Kong which is much more expensive or traveling in China—they will stay in China. (Mainland Chinese Tour guide Interview 2009). The implication here is that Shanghai Disneyland could siphon off some of the Mainland Chinese tourists from HKDL. Given the fact that these tourists represent nearly a third of all visitors to HKDL, this could be disastrous.

Both Disney Incorporated and its Hong Kong governmental partner are obviously invested in having Hong Kong Disneyland succeed. The park’s success, in turn, is dependent on effective marketing to stimulate consumption and generate profit. The superb Ocean Park (OP) marketing team overshadows the Disney marketing in significant ways. By comparison, OP has been quite successful marketing to local and international groups, by employing a constantly changing supply of commercials, ads, viral videos, YouTube videos, and discounts. OP is employing Hong Kong Cantonese myths, jokes, and stories that Disney is not doing. Hong Kong Disneyland is also subject to tight corporate control and every step requires approval from the corporate chain of leadership, which hinders its ability to respond quickly to changing events on the ground.

William Mazarella’s (2003) work on advertising agencies in contemporary India highlights the ways marketing can impact not only individual companies but also the

culture at large. Specifically, he traces the emergence of mass consumption in India in the 1980s. Looking at the 1990s, he delineates a changing relationship between the local and the global, which transformed Indian advertising professionals paradoxically into guardians of “authentic” Indian culture. The equivalent for this is the rival indigenous theme park, Ocean Park. According to my informants Ocean Park has become for some Hong Kong residents, a sort of unofficial local repository of Hong Kong culture. This happened after Disney arrived in 2005. People that I interacted with perceive brands differently according to their backgrounds. Stuart Hall (1974) and Christina Schwenkel (2009) argue that visuals mean different things to different people. For example my informants claim that Ocean Park is the “Hong Kong people’s park” and it was therefore appropriate for them to be anti-Disney. Rosemary Coombie (1998) argues that logos and iconic brand images are signs of a consumer culture that is dominated by intellectual property law. This is the case for Disney in that it has extensive copyrights to all of its different properties. One 25-year veteran of Disney marketing in France and the United States told me that initially Disney did not market extensively in Mainland China because of fears of copyright infringements.

Disney Developed to Attract Mainland Chinese Tourists

Time and time again in my interviews locals expressed the belief that the park was intended for Mainland Chinese and international tourists. One Hong Kong educator indicated to me that the park did not have enough features related to Hong Kong as compared to Ocean Park. However, this view was not universal: another Hong Kong

businessman that I interviewed said that he wished the park was more global like the Disney World in Orlando Florida. Many of my Hong Kong resident respondents knew that a large percentage (over 30 percent) of the Hong Kong Disneyland visitors were Mainland Chinese tourists. The Hong Kong residents that I interviewed said that Hong Kong could not survive on its own and that it needed tourists for its economy. Post 1997, many of the long distance tourists were no longer coming to Hong Kong and instead Mainland Chinese were replacing them. The discourse on how the park was sold to the people was the fact that they were told over and over that it would bring in more global tourists (Choi 2009). The belief held by some Hong Kong residents that Hong Kong Disneyland was built specifically to bring in more Mainland Chinese tourists is problematic on many levels. This feeds into Hong Kong residents existing distrust of Mainland China. Hong Kong was a colony of Great Britain for over 100 years, which engendered simultaneous feelings of superiority over, and fear of, Mainland China. In addition, Hong Kong was a common destination for refugees fleeing China in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, which resulted in a deeply rooted distrust of the official Beijing Chinese government, both past and present. For many, this distrust was exacerbated by the 1997 return of Hong Kong to Mainland China which resulted in a mass exodus of Hong Kong people immigrating the United States, Canada, and Australia. Some Hong Kong residents extend their distaste for the Mainland Chinese government to the Mainland Chinese populace. One of my interviewers saw Hong Kong Disneyland marketing as consisting of cheap gimmicks to attract mainland Chinese tourists. For example, he noted that the park used a special one-day visa pass where Mainland Chinese

could enter into Hong Kong but only in order to see Hong Kong Disneyland, a practice he saw as ineffective. A Hong Kong Businessman put it this way,” You have to hide [these Hong Kong Disneyland marketing promotions] and it leaks out. Hong Kong Disneyland has a \$250 ticket and an \$88 ticket, which includes a ticket for any resident of Hangzhou, but they can only go to Disneyland! You can only go to Disneyland for \$88, and for Disney it is just a gimmick to just boost [attendance] numbers. This type of marketing is like when you take a tour and the tour guide only takes you to the jewelry shop where the tour guide gets a kickback. We are in the twenty first century, grow up ... it cheapens the brand. (Interview: Local Hong Kong Businessman 2010). As this quote demonstrates, Hong Kong maintains tight restrictions on Mainland Chinese access to the island for people coming as either tourists or long term residents. Mainland Chinese are generally not allowed to move to or visit Hong Kong without a visa that is often difficult to get. Mainland Chinese visas stipulate that the guest return immediately to the mainland after visiting the park.

Chinese Publics Class and Ethnic Frictions

It is not uncommon to hear Hong Kong residents make fun of “the Ugly Mainlander” who is seen as uncouth, on the one hand, but is criticized for using “new money” to buy up million dollar properties in Hong Kong, on the other. The perception, then, that Hong Kong Disneyland is a park targeted toward Mainland Chinese tourists is

not appealing to some Hong Kong residents. As one of my local Hong Kong businessman informants put it:

Hong Kong Disneyland is not organized, the queuing, pushing around --very rude. LA [Anaheim Disneyland] is friendly. The Mainland Chinese people--they push—spitting, yelling, spitting. The mainland Chinese -- that is the worst part about the park.” (HK Businessmen Oral History 2010)

There are various frictions, such as, between the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) and the Disney Corporation. Another friction is between the mainland Chinese and Hong Kong population. In *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Anna Tsing (2005) challenges the Clash of Civilizations thesis by Samuel Huntington. She looks at Indonesia during the 1980s and 1990s in when capitalists and locals awkwardly reshaped the land to meet their needs. These groups’, an odd coalition of environmentalists, UN funding agencies, students, and mountaineers, was successful sometimes in getting their agenda across. You can see various actions and their frictions everyday at Hong Kong Disneyland.

Yes...there is some resentment I would guess. It is more than that. [In] the past few years a lot of [Mainland Chinese] women have come to Hong Kong to give birth. A lot of pregnant women come to Hong Kong to give birth and get Hong Kong citizenship [for their child or eventually for themselves?]. Then they get this entire free healthcare and then are gone. I think there is a culmination of different incidents for Disney I don't know the particular incidents for Disney. I think those people who were there that tried to squeeze through were from Mainland. The mainland people they just don't queue. (Local HK Journalist Interview: 2008)

Every time my family and I went to Hong Kong Disneyland we observed a shouting match between a local Hong Kong resident and a Mainland Chinese child or adult.

Furthermore, many of the workers I interviewed mentioned daily verbal fights at the park. This is in reality definitely not “the happiest place on earth.” The Hong Kong Disneyland workers often mediate these disputes in a professional manner. A common recurring conflict revolves around queue culture. It is often noted that China lacks a culture of queuing, or lining up. Hong Kong, on the other hand typically follows western notions of queuing. ^{iv}One day I observed a local Hong Kong mother screaming in Cantonese at a Mainland child that cut in front of her and her family. Of course, the child spoke Mandarin and thus did understand Cantonese and was surprised and confused by the woman’s reaction. Both parties in this conflict acted appropriately given their respective cultural scripts. The mother’s intense reaction undoubtedly was fueled by the belief that the child’s line cutting was inappropriate, while the child’s surprise clearly indicated his lack of understanding of why it was inappropriate.

These sorts of conflicts ran the gamut from hilarious (such as Hong Kong teenagers locking arms and spreading their legs to thwart would be line cutters) to sad. For example, in another notable incident that we saw a Mainland Chinese boy urinating into the Disney bushes. A gaggle of Hong Kong Disneyland workers swarmed around him like a SWAT team and told him to not do this. Again, it can be argued that both parties acted according to their respective cultural scripts. The small boy, for his part, engaged in a common Mainland Chinese practice while the Hong Kong Disneyland staff reacted to a practice that they saw as highly inappropriate.⁹

These conflicts are not unique to Hong Kong Disneyland. One of the most notable 2012 news items was when a Mainland Chinese woman fed her daughter dried noodles

on the MTR subway. A local HK man told the women in furious Mandarin that you are not allowed to eat on the subway. Other Mainlanders laughed at the Hong Kong man's less than perfect Mandarin. The Hong Kong man then screamed back that they should speak Cantonese since they are in Hong Kong. This escalated further and the police were called. Another Hong Kong man told his fellow local not to bother with the mainland Chinese as they are all "uncivilized."

This incident was caught on tape and eventually went viral, sparking debates about language and culture. A professor named Kong Qingdong in Beijing who was interviewed said it was ridiculous that Chinese people had to learn all the 200 plus dialects in China, and that everyone must speak Mandarin. Professor Kong Qingdong, said on a Beijing talk show, "We [Chinese] don't have the responsibility to speak the local dialect, but everyone has the responsibility to speak Mandarin," he then went on to say. "Those who think they don't have to are bastards. Many Hong Kongers think they are not Chinese. Those kinds of people were British *running dogs* [...]. Now they are just dogs. [NPR: 2-21-2012 my emphasis] Needless to say, there was a lot of outrage in Hong Kong over this comment. One local Hong Kong resident responded by changing the lyrics of the Eason Chan's popular Canto-pop song "Under Fuji Mountain" to attack Mainland Chinese. Among other things, the altered lyrics depicted Mainland Chinese as locusts, who are always "stealing, cheating, and lying." "Thanks to Mainland China," the lyrics articulate, "Hong Kong is deteriorating inch by inch." (The World 2-21-12)

There are several reasons for this ire. Ma Nok, a government studies professor, argues that Hong Kong people dislike the Mainlanders because of the feeling that Mainland

women come to Hong Kong to give birth so their children can get the free education and a lifetime of reduced rates of healthcare. Even Mainland women married to Hong Kong husbands protest when they feel slighted by Mainlanders who have no connection to Hong Kong get healthcare. There are some Hong Kong residents who think that Mainlanders drive up prices such as housing and goods when they come to Hong Kong. A third concern is that television presents the prosecution and conviction of Chinese dissents such as Ai Wei Wei for speaking out. This makes Hong Kong people angry, distrustful, and nervous. In reaction Hong Kong identity has increasingly turned inwards incorporating less and less of a Chinese sense of self or personhood. In the majority of interviews when I asked them what they identified as they often said that they were “Hong Kongers” not mainland Chinese. This interethnic cultural Chinese war is not simple. The disputes are not really about spilled noodles; they have a deeper significance. I argue that Hong Kong people cannot publicly go against the Beijing government so they instead lash out irrationally or rationally from their point of view at the Mainland Chinese tourists that arrive. This is a plausible explanation for some of the violent verbal disputes I have seen in Hong Kong Disneyland. This directly relates to marketing and consumption in that the park is perceived as developed for the Mainland Chinese tourists which they have testy relationships with. Thus, some HK residents may object to going to the park if they know there will be a large group of Mainland Chinese located there.

Poll Results About the Cause of Frictions between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese

Journalist Amy Li in “Why are Chinese Tourist So Rude? (South China Morning Post August 31, 2013) gives some serious thought to why some Mainland Chinese tourists are perceived as rude. She lists education as a factor in that many older Mainland Chinese tourist did not have a high educational background or broad global knowledge. Some of these tourists do not speak English and are not fluent Mandarin (or Putonghua) speakers. Another reason that Chinese are perceived as bad mannered is that not all of these Chinese tourists follow the local customs of the country that they visit. For instance, tipping is foreign in China and thus Mainland Chinese tourists tend not to tip as much or at all in other countries. Li also argues that some Chinese do not follow all the local Chinese laws because they see their leaders not following laws. “Living in China, where the rule-of-law doesn’t exist, means everyone has to look out for their own interest. It means people have little or no respect for laws.” (Li, South China Morning Post: August 31, 2013). International news has recently taken note of Mainland Chinese not following all the host country rules. For example there was a Mainland Chinese teenager who defaced a Egyptian pyramid that brought international condemnation. Another example was a Mainland Chinese man who was arrested in Italy for public urination.

There have been many recent notable instances of disputes between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents in Hong Kong. In fact Li from the Public Opinion Program of the University of Hong Kong states, “the number of Hong Kongers holding negative feelings toward Beijing and mainland Chinese is up 40 per cent since

November.” SCMP.com had a “What makes Hong Kongers dislike mainlanders so much?” poll. The results showed: 71% ill behaved tourists, 1% Cross border trading, 17% Communist report, 8% Jealousy and Bias and 3% Other. (South China Morning Post poll Aug 30, 2013). Clearly, fully 71% of the people polled considered Mainland Chinese ill behaved tourists.

“Dr Chung Kim-wah, from the Department of Applied Social Science at University said the negative feelings were the accumulation of events over the recent years that included the scramble for milk formula, Beijing’s remarks on universal suffrage, the so called autonomy movement, and the scandals plaguing the Leung Chun-Ying administration.” (Cheung South China Morning Post Aug 31 2013). These feelings may soften over time as dependence on China grows. After WWII there were many wealthy Americans who came to Europe and were dubbed the “Ugly Americans.” There have also been other stereotypes of the “Ugly Japanese” or “Ugly Middle-easterner.” Over time I predict Mainland Chinese will learn to be in line with normative tourist behavior. The transnational consumption patterns of Hong Kong residents are quite different from the majority of mainland Chinese. But right now they are considered “the Ugly Mainlanders.”

HONG KONG POPULACE SOPHISTICATED CONSUMPTION

Some Hong Kong people are quite used to transnational consumption practices and extensive travel (Watson 1997). It is a global city; and many people from around the

world live for a stint in Hong Kong. The local people are very aware of international trends. So, it is common for Hong Kong middle-class families to travel to neighboring countries. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, argues that Hong Kong holds a “world record when it comes to individual consumer culture.” For example, 36 percent of consumers go shopping at least once a week (Betz-Bornstein 2012). In addition, since airfare is relatively cheap, a large percentage of middle-class Hong Kong residents have the opportunity to visit Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and many parts of mainland China.^v Some of my interviewees had been to several Disneyland parks. Some Hong Kong parents take their children to Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo Disney Sea, which are only a two-hour plane ride away. The point here is to show that many Hong Kong residents are quite well traveled.

The Hong Kong Disney park was mass marketed to Hong Kong media and residents as a wondrous place that would make Hong Kong family friendly and secure its status as a “globally” competitive city, so local Hong Kong residents’ expectations were initially quite high. However, when locals actually went to view what turned out to be the smallest Disneyland in the world—only 10 percent the size of Disneyworld in Florida -- they were not impressed. For example, one of my interviewees who went during the opening days made the observation that Hong Kong Disneyland was only as big as Victoria Park, an average-sized urban park in Hong Kong. These savvy Hong Kong residents, many of whom had been to EPCOT and Disneyland in California, knew instantly that their Disneyland was microscopic in comparison, and that it lacked the diverse attractions and thrill rides of other Disneylands’. Realizing they were getting

only 20 percent of a "true" Disney theme park, they felt cheated. Many of my informants reflected this sentiment to me that the park was too small. When I took my family to the park, they also complained that the park did not have enough attractions for them to spend the whole day there.

The disappointment with the actual park came on the heels of the well-publicized unequal business partnership between Disney and Hong Kong. Thus it further added to local ambivalence towards the park. Dr John Ap, Professor of Hotel and Management conducted many surveys gauging local Hong Kong people's reactions to Hong Kong Disneyland. In a telephone survey conducted from 2000-2006, he surveyed a random sample of 524 residents with the assistance of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Computer Aided Survey Team (CAST) housed in the Department of Applied Social Sciences. His primary finding was that Hong Kong residents have mixed opinions toward Hong Kong Disneyland. While 86% welcomed the increased tourism associated with HKDL, 56% felt that the agreement between Hong Kong and Disneyland was unfair and another 70% indicated that their "opinions toward HK Disneyland have become more negative due to the problems that have been experienced since its opening (Source: Dr. John Ap, 2006 "Residents have mixed opinions toward Hong Kong Disneyland).^{vi} The media such as *the South China Morning Post* was quick to report these local Hong Kong resident reactions and to emphasize the disappointments. The results were splashed all over the local newspapers, but Hong Kong Disneyland marketers and public relations experts had no immediate response. This lack of response was a function of Disney's hierarchical decision-making structure that dictated what to say to the media. The

ongoing labor issues at Hong Kong Disneyland, however, still garner a great deal of negative de facto marketing. The larger point here is that there seemed to be a perfect storm in overwhelming negative media coupled with Chinese public frictions that effected the full positive consumption and marketing of the park.

Mass Consumption Theory & Resistance

Hong Kong Disneyland struggles because there is no “direct translation” in Hong Kong. By 2006, the disappointing attendance figures at Hong Kong Disneyland spoke volumes. Disney announced that it had yet to meet the projected 5.6 million visitors per year. In fact, attendance had fallen a half million visitors short of projections. Through 2013, the park has lost money every year that it has been in operation. There are ongoing questions from the local Hong Kong government and populace about the viability of the park. Theodor W. Adorno and Marx Horkheimer argue in “*The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*” that society has lost its ability to “nourish true freedom and individuality...as well as to represent the real conditions of existence” (1945: 31). They famously contend that people consume mindlessly. Consumption is a way to not see the true unequal structures around you. Following Karl Marx’s theory of social alienation in the workplace, Adorno and Horkheimer term the structures that force constant consumerism, “the Culture Industry.” Examples of these structures include marketing, advertising, and entertainment, all of which aim to advance the capitalist ethic through consumption. Hong Kong would seem to be a perfect case study for Adorno and

Horkheimer's theory as it has often been critiqued as a place that is overly concerned with economic consumption.

I argue that the fact that some of my Hong Kong informants are not attending the theme park in droves, and in some cases avoiding it altogether, means that they are not being duped by the Disney mass consumption strategies. Their lack of attendance at Hong Kong Disneyland can be read as a form of resistance in the vein of Michel de Certeau (1980, 1984). The residents resist and circumvent the pressures to consume at HKDL by not going to the park and talking poorly about the park. In my interviews it was rare to have a glowing review of the park. Instead it seemed almost in vogue to critique the park. My argument positions itself next to Baudrillard and Bourdieu, and I believe that it applies to Hong Kong residents in that their consumption patterns show both their status and identity as sophisticated consumers. I argue that the local Hong Kong residents show resistance and reinforce their social status position, especially against Mainland Chinese visitors by not attending the park in droves.

However, the consumption choices and resistance of Hong Kong's residents do happen in a vacuum. Indeed, Hong Kong residents protested British colonialism in many ways, and continued pro-Democracy protests following Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. For example, tens of thousands Hong Kong residents routinely show up for the annual remembrances of the 1989 Chinese crackdown on civil liberties at Tiananmen Square. In light of the rich street food tradition Hong Kong Disneyland also has a high bar to clear when it comes to satisfactorily feeding its patrons. Hong Kong locals often complained that the food at Hong Kong Disneyland was too expensive, peculiar (in

looks, form and taste), and culturally insensitive. A teenage interviewee disgustingly said to me that she hated her \$10.00 USD BBQ rice. Four MTR (Mass Transit Railroad) subway stops away, she said that she could also get the “real deal” for less than half the price and double the flavor. It is no wonder that the food at Disneyland was perceived by the local Hong Kong residents as not successful in a myriad of ways. A good example of problematic food choices and presentation is having their food items wrapped in plastic. For example you can routinely see plastic wrapped hot dogs and squid sticks, which you would not see in the United States or on Hong Kong streets.

MISCUES IN CONSUMPTION

Main Street -- like the whole city for that matter -- is presented at once as realistic, and absolutely fantastic, and this is the advantage[...]of Disneyland over toy cities. The houses of Disneyland are full sized on the ground floor, and a two-thirds scale on the floor above, so they give the impression of being inhabitable (and they are) but also belonging to a fantastic past we can [only] grasp with our imagination. The Mainstreet façade is presented to us [visitors] as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disguised supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing you are still playing. (Travels in Hypereality," Umberto Eco, quoted in Detwiler 150:2011)

A second seminal consumption piece is by Betsy Taylor and Dave Tilford's ,“Why Consumption Matters” (2000) offers an ecological critique of middle class lifestyles of mass consumption. They argue environment cannot survive the stripping away of its resources without an equal replenishment. This also applies to food, buildings, and land. Eco contends that Disney is built for guests to mindlessly consume.

Like most theme parks, Disneyland is dependent on consumption, which I argue is bad for the environment. Hong Kong has a dearth of undeveloped spaces, and the sacrifice of precious remaining natural land for a theme park engendered much local criticism. Recurrent questions that I heard asked in my interviews were: Why could not the land be used to develop more housing for the overcrowded Hong Kong residents? Why did they not use the land to expressly help Hong Kong residents and not tourists? Why did they not investigate further Hong Kong culture and develop something directly for Hong Kong residents? Why could not the land remain undeveloped so Hong Kong families could enjoy much needed nature? In trying to also answer their own questions, one of my informants indicated that Hong Kong does not have a culture of being nature orientated like some societies. He instead said the Hong Kong culture is related to monetary accumulation although I have met some Hong Kong resident hiking enthusiasts.

Hong Kong cultures are these online games [for kids]. Maybe I am jaded. It is not Chinese Opera. Hong Kong culture for adults is to make money and to get a better life for your family. It is an extremely mercenary culture. I am sorry; it is a very materialist culture, what kind of clothes you wear, what kind of car you drive. It is a façade it is superficial. Basically they look at you from an exterior. Maybe that is my viewpoint. (Local Hong Kong Businessman Interview 2010)

Thorstein Veblen's (1899) *Theory of Leisure Class* is seminal in the "mass consumption of cultural artifacts" debate. He argues that the military is no longer a way to demonstrate power. Instead, in the modern world, those who have the ability to massively consume (i.e., "conspicuous consumption") show they are part of the leisure

class and are those who should lead. Hong Kong is one of the highest-consumption cities in the world. Some argue that Hong Kong never developed a rigid class system. Instead, class status is signaled by one's ability to consume goods and services. Here I want to link Hong Kong Disneyland's lack of consumption by Hong Kong residents as both informative and resistive. That is, the Hong Kong residents that I interviewed are using their status position and sophistication to make a conscious decision not to go to HKDL. This is the opposite case for the mainland Chinese tourists who visit.

Hsu and Huang (2007) argue that Mainland Chinese venture to Hong Kong Disneyland in order to consume in a manner that they associate with the West, but which they are not fully permitted to carry out in their own country. One of my informants contended that mainland Chinese tourists gained prestige and the admiration of others by going to Hong Kong Disneyland. (Local Hong Kong Mother Oral History 2008) The larger point here is that different people perceive the same space quite differently. Hong Kong residents are quite blessed in that their local food offerings are so delicious, varied, and inexpensive.

Hong Kong Local food Nirvana

Between May 2009 and September 2010 my family and I consumed our way through Hong Kong. At some point I stopped cooking almost completely, and we started going

out to eat almost every night like many of the locals do. This was especially true at the end of a day of my fieldwork. In Hong Kong the street food is delicious and you do not have to be wealthy to eat it. Why would I cook when for less than \$2.00 USD I could get food nirvana at the local street stall? I could get a Cantonese meal that rivaled a Michelin star restaurant^{vii} right on the street or on the eighth floor of an unassuming-looking building's food court. Hong Kong cuisine is economical, earnest, and electrifyingly evocative. My story is not unique; to quote Anthony Bourdain, "good food is a Hong Kong birthright." As with other forms of consumption, food consumption traditions are not created in a vacuum. For example, in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that what and where you eat are often markers of your class or cultural capital. Jean Baudrillard and Pierre Bourdieu linked consumption to status and social meaning. Perhaps as a Western product, Disneyland confers higher status onto Hong Kong. It is a mark of class when residents of Hong Kong can purchase a foreign product from Europe, Japan, or the United States. But is that the case? In one of my interviews one of local Hong Kong resident asked, "Why can't Hong Kong have its own Hong Kong attractions and not import Western ones?" (Oral History 2010) This complaint was not uncommon in my interviews. Especially post 1997 Hong Kong is now in competition with other Mainland Chinese cities such as Shanghai and also other Asian countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Korea, and Japan. In the case of Disney some of my interviewees were very proud to tell me that they did go or consume the park. They felt superior to the park and its visitors. It seemed like they were invoking their feelings of cultural capital over the Mainland Chinese ethnics who may be relatively wealthy.

Notions of “Authentic” Hong Kong Food in a World of Chinese Food Diversities

Here I want to problematize the notion of “authentic” Chinese food. Margery Fee argues in “Who Can Write For Others?” (1995) that demands for "authenticity" deny Fourth World writers a living, changing culture (243). To extend this analysis to the consumption of food we must interrogate the notion of "true" Chinese food. Andrew Coe (2009) contends that Chinese food has continually changed over the centuries and has always been influenced by China's geography. Hong Kong imports many of its food supplies from overseas, particularly from Mainland China. Many Chinese food experts argue that what we often think of as “authentic” Chinese food is actually Chinese cuisine that has been improvised outside of China. (Anderson, 1988, Coe 2009, Lee 2008, Wu, 2002). Some of the examples out of a plethora Chinese food that has been adapted to local countries is Chinese American, Chinese Italian and Chinese Caribbean food. Hong Kong also controversially has been accused of being an “inauthentic” Chinese space because of its long history of British colonialism. This relates to the dilemma that Hong Kong Disneyland confronts in deciding how to craft a menu that will meet the diverse expectations of Hong Kong, mainland Chinese, and international appetites. “When Hong Kong people dine out they seek variety and a wide range of choices. Perhaps eating in McDonalds for breakfast, lunching at a Japanese restaurant, buying snacks at the Taiwan tea shop, and having Indian curry for dinner....All of these kinds of foods are found in Hong Kong...” (Sidney Cheung, *The Globalization of Chinese Food* 2002: 110)

Sidney Cheung contends that the 'local' in Hong Kong food culture is actually quite global. In addition, Stuart Hall (1990) reminds us that this identity is linked to concepts of local, but it is not static; rather, it is a state of "becoming." Cheung (2002) argues that China suffered and survived many famines, and thus does not share the same food taboos that other cultures may hold. This may lead some conclude that Chinese food is not held to the same regard to other cuisines. Sidney Mintz says it is "seriously misleading to deemphasize the importance of food in Han Culture. (Wu and Cheung 2002: xvii). All of these consumption notions very much inform the analysis of the success and failures of Hong Kong Disneyland marketing and consumption as Disney did not understand the critical importance of food to some of the patrons.

The greatest issue, honestly, they have claimed they are culturally relevant when they arrived and they studied [local cuisine]. They studied everything and they introduced very simplified Westernized Chinese food on opening [day]. They had Western BBQ rice and Hainanese chicken rice and they had a Western chef and a Western staff dominated. They claimed they are local but guests knew.[sic] (Hong Kong High Executive Interview 2010)

Food served at Hong Kong Disneyland is an odd mix of Western and ostensibly Cantonese dishes but often differ from their non-Disney version in some significant way. Similarly, Hong Kong Disneyland's attempts to import variations of "American" food also miss the mark. I observed one Anglo-American enter the Hong Kong Disneyland Main Street bakery where he objected to the park's interpretation of pie. He said gruffly, "These are not pies, where are the pies?" The Hong Kong Disneyland worker repeatedly

pointed to the Hong Kong Chinese adapted or sinicized version of a fruit pie, which is more akin to a tart filled with solid egg custard instead of fruit. Hong Kong “pies” are a Chinese version of American pies. In contrast to American pies, some Hong Kong pies are more doughy, contain little fruit, and are not overtly sweet. They would be unrecognizable to an Americans in search of a classic American Pie.

One could argue, however, that Hong Kong Disneyland was attempting to adjust to local tastes by offering Chinese interpretations of pie. For example, the Krispy Kreme franchise came to Hong Kong and thought they would be as profitable as KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonald’s, but were soon out of business because they underestimated the degree to which the people of Hong Kong tend to eschew both overly sweet items like Western-style pies or cakes and many milk or cheese-based dessert items (Anderson 1989) However, the lack of intense sweets means that the food experience at Hong Kong Disneyland is different from its American counterparts. For example, while funnel cakes are a staple item at the Anaheim Disneyland, they were nowhere to be seen at Hong Kong Disneyland. I use this example to illustrate how possible American visitors who are used to the American theme park food fare of fried and sugary items may also be dissatisfied.

Ethnocentric Lack of Local Hong Kong Cultural and Historical Attractions to Consume

Hong Kong Disney has nothing about Hong Kong! No games especially- no games or attractions. In Japan it is different- the area is large -- Japanese Broadcasting. Personally I was in Japan and like the behavior. Japanese staffs are more polite. In Hong Kong Disneyland I have no particular feeling...I just kill time unlike when I went to Tokyo Disneyland. [Local Hong Kong Academic Interview: 2010]

In my Interviews, locals often commented on the lack of Hong Kong culture in Hong Kong Disneyland. A common question among locals was, “why import an American company”? One interviewee said, “Why doesn’t HK focus [locally] and sell an Asian tourist destination? Why not make it an Asian tourist attraction?” (Oral history 2010). This interviewer was trying to ask why there not a “Hong Kong specific theme park” or at least some Hong Kong themed attractions at Disney. Overall, the park lacks overt and significant references to Hong Kong. One exception to this is on the *It’s a Small World Ride* there is the sky scraper landscape that the boat passes and the workers of course speak three languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. Beyond that, there are few references to Hong Kong’s actual history and culture. The lack of local Hong Kong features at the park is problematic in that it represents another failure to connect to local Hong Kong residents.

One local academic (who is also a descendant of local fisherman) offered specific recommendations to make the park more local Hong Kong. He said, ”Design a game with Hong Kong history- therefore [one] can sense it is a Disneyland.” (Local

Educator Oral History, 2009) This ties directly to the mass consumption and mass media literature in that Hong Kong people have been shown to consume both local and internationally owned brands. Hong Kong residents certainly do like American brands. For example, Hong Kong has the most 7/11s, per capita, in the world. Hong Kong people are no strangers to international brands. However, unlike Hong Kong Disneyland, many other international brands have accommodated local tastes. Among other things, McDonalds sells lychee pies, as well as chicken drumsticks that still have their bones, Pizza Hut sells pizza with squid and you can even buy hamburgers made out of rice throughout Hong Kong. One point that my informant made was that he wished that there could be distinct Hong Kong features at the park. The larger point is that Hong Kong residents like international brands and have a great variety of brands to pick from.

Other Popular Culture Competitors in Asia:

I have been to all the Disneyland's except Orlando. Tokyo Disneyland is the best, better than Hong Kong Disneyland. I have been to Paris Disneyland and it was small but I liked it. Tokyo Disneyland is the best. I can rank it Tokyo, LA, and then Hong Kong. It is sad I am from Hong Kong. At Tokyo Disneyland they are very polite and it makes you feel welcome. In Hong Kong if you were to contrast it to LA- there is less smiling. It is in the culture; if everyone is screaming [at each other]- why are you going to smile? (Oral History of local Hong Kong Disney Enthusiast 2010)

My kids like Japanese and Korean animation more than Disney (Oral History Hong Kong Journalist 2008).

Japanese (Kawaii) and Korean Pop (Hallyu) Culture is more influential than Disney

Discussions of Hong Kong Disney often elicit comparisons to other Disneyland's and also Japanese (Kawaii) and Korean (Hallyu) popular culture. "No.1 It (Hong Kong Disneyland) is too small and expensive. They do not even have the Pirate's of Caribbean ride. People who have been to other Disneyland's know it is not as good" (Local HK Disney Enthusiast Interview 2010). Tokyo Disneyland as well as other countries popular culture competes against the park. One challenge Hong Kong Disneyland faces is the popularity of other non-American popular culture. For example, Korean all-girl and all-boy bands like the Wonder Girls, Girls Generation, and Boy Junior are famous all over Asia including Hong Kong. Rain, a Korean Male pop star routinely sells out stadiums in Hong Kong.

Japanese popular culture is also ubiquitous throughout Hong Kong. On any given day on the subway you will encounter countless young children and even young adults holding Japanese electronic toys such as the Nintendo DSi and Sony PSPs. Furthermore, Japanese elaborate Kawaii fashions and robot comics are also popular on the island. In the book *Millennium Monsters* (2006) Anne Allison talks about how Pokemon, Sailor Moon, and Power Rangers have swept America and influenced a whole generation of young Americans.¹¹ Allison argues that Kawaii is popular because the characters are cute, flexible, and cross the human-animal divide. She also argues that Pokemon in particular mimic Capitalism. I would add that Japanese popular culture has also influenced Asia and the globe. It is important here to note that many of my interviewees stated that Japanese and Korean popular culture is more successful than American popular culture, which had a direct impact on the theme park attendance.

There are many dynamic reasons for this, such as a preference for Japanese stories that are open ended and nuanced. As explained by one of my informants:

Japan has its own animation. I talk with my friends about it. The Disney stories are very simple; good guys and bad guys. Then they get married and it is over. That is very formulaic; the stuff we grew up with was much more complex. You cannot tell good from bad. The ending is ambiguous... sometimes it is not resolved, good or bad in your head. You have to work it out for yourself. In Disney stories, it is very clear what happened. Japanese animation is not that [sic] (Hong Kong advertisement executive 2010).

Most of my Hong Kong interviewees preferred Japanese or Korean animation to Disney's animation. Anime style shows like *Code Geass*, *Deathnotes*, *Full Metal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, and *Cowboy Bebop* were also wildly successful. These shows are different from traditional Disney animation in central ways such as complexity and deeper themes such as colonialism. Helen Silverman's (2002) article, *The Emperor's New Groove* argues that American Disney products carry deeper colonial, racial, and gender themes. These themes can be subtle and even hidden. Japanese animation is overtly full of intriguing gender switches, colonialism, and open-ended conclusions. In addition, Japanese and Korean products and performances tend to cater to some Asian aesthetics; for example, performers tend to be slender, and white skinned. One could also argue that these Korean and Japanese cultural products also tap into underlying Confucius and Buddhist cultural principles that is shared among East Asian countries.

CONSUMPTION CHALLENGES: “We Like Taking Pictures but We Like Rides Too”

It is important to note that there are consumption elements that were not addressed fully at Hong Kong Disneyland. One journalist I interviewed stated that Disneyland in Hong Kong was not as effective as it could be even though as a corporation was successful in general. He went on to say that the fact that Disneyland has survived so long and grown over 50 years and even expanded their brand globally means they are doing an excellent job. This journalist went on to say that Hong Kong Disneyland tried to appeal to the locals and Mainlanders but that this was a new market. He said that Disney definitely tried but misunderstood the differences between these groups and between each of them and other audiences. He noted that Disney Incorporated must not think the differences are black and white.

He contended that Disney did market research, which showed that locals, Chinese, and other Asians like to take photographs a lot. They did market research and that is what the research told them. They designed the park with a number of scenic spots in mind for photo opportunities. Addressing the local penchant for taking photos from every possible angle has been harder. One step has been to install another, stationary teacup ride next to the line for the Mad Hatter Tea Cups so that visitors can take photos while waiting, and not slow down the loading and unloading process of the ride. On the other hand the park has fell short in the number of exhilarating attractions and major shows to keep visitors occupied for a long time or the whole day. In many of my interviews with local Hong Kong residents they mentioned that the park is too small and lacks thrill rides like Ocean

Park. “We like to play with the camera relative to Americans, Europeans, but we also like thrilling rides and watching shows. So I think they made the mistake [of thinking it was] either/or. They thought it was either or and not both” [Hong Kong Journalist 2010]. This relates to marketing and consumption in that the park thought they were fulfilling consumption needs of having photographic opportunities, but they neglected to include other consumption needs such as thrilling rides and attractions.

Lower Number of Local Consumers Due to Low Birth Rate of Hong Kong Residents

Behind the happy faces of Hong Kong Disneyland is another big irony: the [Hong Kong] people laying on this excursion into fantasyland are less and less [able] to have children themselves. It’s a celebration of their own vanishing childhood. [McDonald 2005: 3]

Hong Kong women, as is the case in other industrialized countries around the world, are not having fewer numbers of children. There are currently over 7 million documented residents in Hong Kong. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimates the birthrate to be 7.54/ 1000 population which is not high in comparison to other industrialized countries. In Hong Kong the lower birthrate is also related to the historical power of literacy for its women. Hong Kong women used to have large families on average but with universal education, there is a big drop in births.

Of course, Hong Kong Disneyland’s use of extensive family themes in its promotion runs the risk of alienating potential child-free consumers. How might the park be redesigned for a different population? Has Disney Incorporated even asked that question? These are questions that the marketing staff should have asked before the

opening of Hong Kong Disneyland. Marketing is also directly correlated with consumption. If products are not marketed correctly to this quite savvy Hong Kong crowd, then there will be a lack of full consumption. One of my informants told me that she was not interested in Disney because she does not have any kids and never plans to have children.

Consumption Summary and Significance

Successful Consumption strategies are key in Hong Kong's economic success for several reasons. Hong Kong does not have its own industry or a lot of farmland space. It has always relied on its low cost labor to get by, live, and thrive. These factory jobs are essentially non-existent as they have moved to Mainland China. Hong Kong had to shift from low cost jobs to tourism. Tourism relies upon a capitalistic model of consumption. I argue that there are distinct miscues that Hong Kong Disneyland had and continues to have that are continuing to impede its economic success. The list includes, high food prices, long queue times for popular rides, the lack of local (indigenous cultural) features and not understanding the considerable threat of Korean and Japanese popular culture competition. Marketing is also directly correlated with consumption. Lest I leave the reader with the impression that Disney did nothing right, this next section goes over marketing and consumption success stories. Disney should be happy that they are doing many things correctly at Hong Kong Disneyland, which is attracting more guest revenue.

MARKETING AND CONSUMPTION SUCCESSES: Interview With a Successful
Community Relations Specialist Ventures in Community Marketing

Not all of Hong Kong Disneyland's marketing efforts missed their mark. One successful marketing proposal involved the employment of a community-relations specialist. The specialist is responsible, for example, for the management of the company's volunteer program, Disney VoluntEARS. [sic] The community-relations specialist organizes of a series of community activities with the participation of cast members from a wide spectrum of the business units. I corresponded with a former Hong Kong Disneyland community-relations specialist about his duties via email. He said that the theme park had a "Stakeholder engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community and charitable groups" (Email Response Survey, July 18, 2013). This means that the park diligently tried to involve community groups by giving away free tickets and doing presentations. He also indicated there was liaison work with the global Disney Worldwide Outreach team to launch various global initiatives locally. This person was the only Hong Kong Disneyland community outreach employee whom I interviewed who was actually attracted to the Disney brand and saw it as successful. "The community work that Hong Kong Disneyland did is [SIC] quite successful. Through our VoluntEARS, we were able to provide the "Disney magic" to those who were in need, such as some special in-park activities as "Disney's Magical

Christmas”[sic] (Email Response Survey from former Disney Community Outreach employee, July 18, 2013).

This specialist further noted that the park used community engagement work to establish and maintain rapport with local NGOs, community, and charitable organizations. Key programs include the territory-wide Jiminy Cricket’s Environmentality Challenge, wherein primary school students make an environmental pledge and participate in-group projects. The program aimed to help raise environmental awareness among young students. The theme park also arranged hospital visits by VoluntEARS and the Disney ambassadors on a regular basis. The former Disney Community Outreach employee indicated that all Hong Kong Disneyland cast members are welcome to join the community engagement work organized by the community-relations team. “They would then become Disney VoluntEARS when delivering the community service to our target audiences.” (Email Response Survey from former Disney Community Outreach employee, July 18, 2013). He further said that the community-relations team engaged with various NGOs and community groups across Hong Kong through various programs in three specific areas: community, children and the environment. The theme park also began to develop rapport with its neighboring communities such as the Tung Chung area. For example, the park directly engaged with local service groups including the Boys’ & Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong, Po Leung Kuk by giving away some tickets. The purpose of all of the programs and initiatives mentioned above was to establish and maintain a strong rapport with the NGOs, to build trust and to strengthen the relationships between HKDL and various

community entities. From his perspective, these initiatives were quite successful marketing strategies and tactics, but, on the flip side, none of my informants had ever heard about any of these community endeavors.

New Digital Formats & Expanded Christmas to Woo Hong Kong Youth

For all the marketing and consumption misfires there are many things that Hong Kong Disneyland is doing right. Another one of the successes is that they are marketing more robustly through social media in China and Hong Kong. Second, they are getting on the digital bandwagon. Cynics might argue that they are copying Ocean Park's digital marketing tools, but it is a step in the right direction, in my opinion. For example, Hong Kong Disneyland has taken a page out of Ocean Park's playbook and has begun making viral videos featuring the park. I have observed that Hong Kong Disneyland is doing more digital marketing in social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to woo local Hong Kong young adults to the theme park. For example there are more HKDL video uploads of locals on rides in YouTube. On the Disney Facebook page there are increased amount of pictures of guests enjoying the park. Hong Kong culture is fast paced and digitally wired, so this is a good marketing tool to woo Hong Kong youth.

Hong Kong Disneyland marketers also learned that local Hong Kong youth enjoy the winter themed Christmas decorations. These marketers noticed an increasing percentage of young Hong Kong adults coming to the park specifically for its Christmas attractions. To compensate for this they put up more Christmas decorations and

expanded Christmas promotions. For example there were more commercials that highlighted the winter wonderland themed elements of the park. Brochures showed Mickey and Minnie in winter wear in front of a nicely decorated Christmas tree.

Mass Surveys Reveal Indian and Chinese Holidays and Palates and locals love of X-mas

We learn things by listening, such as food preference and we need to. By the 5th year of operation we noticed trends: growing a market that is twice in Spring what it is in Autumn, many more Indian guests. We learned their school holiday time. We then need to brief our park staff and rethink. We have to make sure that everyone knows where the Indian food is. Everyone must know and we need to continually plan that. (HKDL High Executive Interview 2010)

Mass surveys that the park is distributing are very effective in learning about the wants and needs of its guests. One HKDL middle manager said that mass surveys revealed that the guests are 40 percent Mainland Chinese, 30 percent internal SE Asian, 30 percent Hong Kong. They have learned a lot about Indian and Mainland Chinese travel plans from these questionnaires. There is also an increase of Disney guests from India as it is relatively close to Hong Kong. The attached Disneyland hotels compensate by having more vegetarian fare for these guests. Hong Kong Disneyland is creating friendly, culturally appropriate, promotions aimed at international and local guests to get further attendance. For example there surveys revealed to some Disney executives that February is the Lunar or Chinese New Year. One HKDL executive told me that “this when China closes down for 10 days and generally people head home.”^{viii} There are some Mainland Chinese who may travel to Hong Kong at this time. He said that specifically

60-70 percent of total Hong Kong tourists will be from mainland China will come to HKDL during this brief time. They have indigenized food items for them and instituted crowd control. They also brief their staff in terms of queuing, sanitation, and noise.

For example the Disney staff are now more prepared for the louder volume of mainland Chinese guests. “The noise level is different from Shanghai...It is just part of their culture and it is not rude. It is just speaking loudly and speaking differently.” (HKDL High Executive 2010).^{ix} The vegetarian food is something that Hong Kong Disneyland may want to highlight as it is exceptional in accommodating different cultural food and volume choices. All of this information was garnered from its mass surveys and has produced a good faith attempt by Disney to accommodate these myriad guests wants.

Indigenizing Apparel for Mainland Chinese guests

“I do not want to call it gaudy [sic], but a Mainlander will spend more, even twice as much for a top with sparkles on it than a regular plain top” (High HKDL Executive Interview 2010). Mainland Chinese patrons often pack the Main Street shops where they can be seen consuming en masse. I often observed them buying bedazzled or sparkly outfits. One high executive of Hong Kong Disney informant indicated that these were sold to the shops specifically with a Mainland Chinese clientele in mind. There are many people around the world, including Mainland Chinese residents who appreciate these more glittering outfits. The HKDL high executive informant impressions were that these clothing choices may change in time as Mainland China becomes more integrated within

the global economy. Perhaps right now, the Mainland Chinese visitors see this kind of clothing as a novelty? HKDL positive clothing offering adjusts accordingly to local apparel tastes. Hong Kong Disneyland accommodates other preference by offering higher priced watches. “Also Mainlanders will pay for the higher range watches that are around 100 USD. These watches on the higher end rather than cheaper watches” (HKDL High Executive Interview 2010). This high level executive indicated that he thought that as the travel patterns for Chinese residents mature with the positive Chinese GDP, there will be more spending from the Mainland Chinese. He indicated that he saw “nicer” makeup, clothes and hair. As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, the park avoids selling culturally offensive items such as green hats, or white candles as these items are associated with bad luck. It will be interesting to see the other indigenized items that they sell in the future.

Excellent Hong Kong Disneyland Hotels

My parents, sister, nephew, and extended family stayed at the Disneyland hotel. It was \$2000 (HKD) for one bedroom, and we stayed in two bedrooms so that was \$4,000 (HKD) and we stayed two nights and three days and we spent \$10,000K (HKD). The service was okay, but the food is considered among the best hotel food in Hong Kong. My mother liked it but thought it was expensive. Their hotel food was one of the best in Hong Kong. (Local Hong Kong resident Disney Fanatic Oral history 2010)

Time and time again the Hong Kong Disneyland hotels have received rave reviews from my local Hong Kong interviewees and workers. My informants comment

on the nicely decorated rooms, exceptional food, and professional staff. There were comments that the conferences held at the hotel went beyond their expectations. One interviewer said that they should have more conferences in the park. The local Hong Kong adults and children also appreciated the costumed characters that came out to greet them during meals. This local appreciation of the hotel does mitigate the rest of the miscues. Unfortunately only the wealthier and well-connected Hong Kong and international residents can utilize it. The hotel is culturally sensitive in that it also has a lot of Chinese elements such as feng shui.

New Humble and Responsive Managing Director

In 2010 the park hired a new high level executive to lead Hong Kong Disney named Andrew Kam who was a former Coca-Cola executive in China. Kam is more attuned to the local Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese culture than his U.S. predecessors because of his long experience working in China. Unlike the other high level executive Disney executives in Hong Kong, Kam is of Chinese descent. He has been seen in the park picking up trash, which is seen as a positive and humble act according to Confucian culture. This is important in Chinese culture in general as his actions show humility, a valued trait in cultural China. Kam is often quoted in the media as assertive, yet modest in his demeanor. This is an important quality as Disney was viewed as full of hubris when they first opened up. He also seems to be more involved with the public marketing by giving more interviews to the media. Former Hong Kong Disneyland Managing directors did not have a long tenure at that position. Currently, HKDL Managing Director Hong Kong local Andrew Kam (2008-Present) is doing an exemplar job that his

predecessors could not achieve. Prior to this, Kam was a high executive, manager, and marketing director of Coca-Cola in China. Before Andrew Kam there was Dave Vermeulen (2008) a 30 plus year Disney veteran, who briefly served as HKDL Managing director. Prior to Vermeulen, Bill Ernest (2006-2008), served as Hong Kong Disneyland Managing Director and is now President of Walt Disney Parks & Resorts, Asia (2008–Present). Don Robinson (2001-2006), also a 34-year veteran in the Walt Disney Company, was the original HKDL Managing director, he is now the president of the Baha Mar Resorts since January 2006. There was a lot of negative publicity during his tenure.

The media have developed a less contentious relationship with HKDL with Andrew Kam at the helm. That Kam has stayed as the corporate leader for a significant time (2010 to present) is definitely a positive for the rank and file Hong Kong Disneyland workers. This is another step in the right direction for the company as it tries to appease the local public.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the marketing and consumption literature by showing the complexities of HKDL marketing and consumer ventures. In this chapter I draw on my ethnography and interview data to demonstrate that issues contributing to compromised attendance and appreciation of the park are not black and white, East Vs. West, or simple examples of a culture clash. Specifically, I argue that Disney was not prepared to manage the cultural friction found at Hong Kong Disneyland. Consequently, Disney has fumbled multiple situations that are rooted in cultural (and often ethnic and

class) differences between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents, which, in turn, has damaged the park's going experiences.

Furthermore, these Chinese interethnic cultural disputes are impeding both Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong residents from taking full advantage of the theme park experience. I also contribute to a more complex and nuanced understanding of the reasons Disney Incorporated has struggled in the Hong Kong context. My interviews often pointed to ethnocentrism and a lack of appreciation for local values and cultural practices (Oral History 2010). One informant further summarized that financial matters may also have been involved for Disney, as it is easier to just carry an already established model in the United States to a new place than it would be to redesign a model that would fit locally. There is a direct interrelationship between consumption and marketing, and corporations must address both to be successful in a culturally different context.

Additionally, in this chapter I tried to show multiple marketing miscues such as: the inappropriateness of using a bird's eye view map of the park, inability to dispel the local belief that the park is for Mainland tourists only, the use of "cheap gimmicks" visas, not using unique Hong Kong features and not monitoring or correcting previously bad publicity. More robust marketing is something that Hong Kong Disneyland needs to work on as the marketing currently is underdeveloped for both Mainland Chinese and locals. My Hong Kong interviewees felt that the park is not for them and is a tax drain to the larger economy. Hong Kong Disneyland marketers need to do niche marketing specifically to Hong Kong's unique cultural global identity. Hong Kong youth are

showing interest in its Christmas Disney celebration and this group needs to be appealed to even more directly as Ocean Park seems to currently have their loyalty. Niche marketing directed solely at Hong Kong residents' is something that Disney Incorporated can do to show how the park is for the local Hong Kong residents as well.

The consumption and marketing issues that are problematic are: inept food, Korean and Japanese popular culture is more influential, culture clashes between local Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese, high costs, and the need for more thrill rides. This is not merely a list of the faux pas of the park, but instead intends to show a larger misfit between the park and its publics. There are some consumption and marketing positive actions that should not be overlooked such as: the use of local surveys and focus groups, catering to more international groups such as Indian visitors, focusing on culturally appropriate clothes sales, hiring of local CEO Andrew Kam, and exemplar hotels with excellent food. These positive features will only multiply as the park conducts more focus groups and in-depth local interviews. If they continue reaching out to Mainland tour guide companies, it is my belief that Disney will increase its attendance. The existences of both positive and negative features in marketing and consumption complicate the Hong Kong Disneyland picture. In some ways Disney is insensitive and ethnocentric, but in others it does a good job at adjusting to certain dimensions of Hong Kong culture. In the future, Hong Kong Disneyland will become more successful with its consumptions and marketing offerings if it listens to its local community mass survey data, and acts on that information. In many aspects the Disney company is improving the park experience for both its international guests and local Hong Kong SAR residents.

Feng Shui Space Indigenization

The Final Disney Frontier

CHAPTER FOUR

JB: What is a good coin souvenir for my mother?

Hong Kong Disney Worker: *This* coin is best for your mom because the [serial] number is “839.” “8” (八) means long, “3” (三) means live (sounds like) and 9 (九) sounds like rich. That means she will live healthy and long.

JB: Which coin for my sister, who has health concerns?

HK Disney Worker: For health for your sister I recommend [the coin with the serial number] “498.” “4” (四) means fortune,¹ “9” (九) enough, “8” (八) means long

JB: Coin for husband and myself?

HK Disney Worker: “811.” “8” (八) means good and “11” (十一) means double love together. All double numbers in Chinese are lucky. It means you will be with the one you love forever and they will love you always.

JB: I’ll take the “811.” (Informal Chat: 4/1/10)

The day began humid as usual, but then the sky turned angry, silently then loudly releasing torrents of hard black typhoon rain that forced me to duck into a *Main Street, USA* shop for some reprieve. The light from the Hong Kong Disneyland Midtown Jewelry Shop immediately flooded my eyes. The bright reflections of shimmering silver

coins and glassware seemed to have halos around them, preening like princesses seeking my attention. I went to a saleswoman or "cast member" to inquire about a particular Mickey Mouse-plated coins commemorating the 2005 opening of the park. Disney tourists, or "guests" as they are called in the United States, would usually expect a sales pitch about the aesthetics or age of the coin, but here in Hong Kong Disneyland I received a sales pitch based on numerology. Numerology is the concept that a particular sequence of numbers can bring your good luck or tragedy. This chapter will look at how Hong Kong Disneyland indigenizes its space. I look at the indigenization of Disney space at several levels. At the first level, I argue that Hong Kong Disneyland itself is a contested space with ongoing culture and ethnic class conflicts between American and Hong Kong governmental partners. At the second level there are space and indigenization issues between intra-national Chinese publics, and finally there is the indigenization of space issues among Hong Kong Disneyland workers. While the issues just mentioned cause some conflict, on the other hand the physical elements of *feng shui* (fung seui in Cantonese), which is an ancient Chinese space arrangement, are done quite well. For example, my interviewees never criticized the material quality of the park construction, which they held in high regard. A former Hong Kong Disneyland engineer commented that Hong Kong did not need that level of high construction.

Andrzej Zieleniec's Space Theory and How it Connects to Hong Kong Disneyland

Andrezej Zieleniec's *Space and Social Theory* (2007) is an essential guide to the importance of space theory. He argues that “public parks, as fairly universal and ubiquitous urban spaces, are composed of a complex interaction of physical features, dominant representations and everyday uses and experiences that all combined to ‘define’ them as social spaces with the network of spaces and spatial arrangement that constituted the social landscape of the city. (Zieleniec 2007: ix) In the Hong Kong Disneyland space you can see this in the daily fights between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents, which are revealing of larger international issues that are occurring between Chinese publics.

Zieleniec contends that Marx's work on historical materialism and capitalism shows how space can be a fetishized commodity and a product/means of production. (xiv) Here it is important to connect the production of the space of Hong Kong Disneyland for the elite and to some extent for the elite international visitor and not the indigenous Hong Kong resident. In "The Sociology of Space" (1997) George Simmel argues that social space is important and revealing of social relations. He argues that social experiences are experienced in space. Space is *both* the product and the means of production. There are significant insights from Simmel's work in my study in that the ordinary space of a theme park is much more than a site for mindless play and enjoyment. This space can also show resistance, conflict and collusion. This is pertinent to Hong Kong Disneyland because there are such a myriad of social interactions that are revealing about how the workers, tourists, and locals feel about their ethnic and class position that I have observed in the spaces of the park. In *The Production of Space* (1991) Henri

Lefebvre argues one must know three things to truly understand space: practice, representation, and use. "For Lefebvre, space is at the centre of a continuing social and historical process, involving conflict and struggle over meanings and values." (Zieleniec 2007: 61) Lefebvre uses the example of the divisions between town and country to make his case. Using the analogy from Lefebvre, Hong Kong Disneyland must be considered as a space of industrialized rare materials that was developed from reclaimed land in Penny Bay, Hong Kong. It is a created space that used to be a part of a larger lush and green eco-system of Lantau Island. For urban dwellers, Lantau epitomizes Hong Kong's past; it is mostly undeveloped, lush in green, a place where people live in old villages, where cars and high rises are scarce, where you can breathe clean air, and where people eat vegetables that they might have grown themselves. This is what Hong Kong used to be like, [sic] people whisper or pronounce to one other, as they walk through Lantau's green spaces, pointing at village buildings, and looking at its residents. (Choy 2011:36)

Tim Choy comments about how Hong Kong used to be a lush area that was then over-developed. Penny Bay is one of the few still green areas in Hong Kong, and it was not developed controversially to become another Disneyland. Choy says that Penny Bay was the "stuff of what dreams are made of," and thus was the chosen site of Hong Kong Disneyland. In 2005 Hong Kong Disneyland was opened in Penny Bay in Lantau Island, much to the displeasure of environmentalists who contended Disney disturbed the ecosystem and wildlife. They also stated that Disney development area would take away much-needed landmass for locals to explore. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world with a lot of development. There is not a lot of greenery for

locals to explore and utilize. The majority ownership by American Disney of the land despite putting in only 10% of the costs, was also disturbing to many local Hong Kong residents since their taxes supplied the other 90% of the park's funding. Lefebvre contends that a representation of the space is another important element to know. In looking at space you learn about a lot about an individual or groups hierarchy, history, and milieu. Hong Kong Disneyland uses *feng shui*, a Chinese geomancy to represent and accommodate the indigenous Hong Kong and East Asian residents.

Chinese Space: The Final Disney Frontier

"It's a tricky business, but few dare to ignore it in Hong Kong. Many believe bad feng shui (pronounced FUNG SHWAY) can cause financial ruin, and Disney wasn't about to risk it, said Tom Morris, a chief designer at Hong Kong Disneyland." (*quoted in Associated Press 2005-09-07*) For 30 minutes my family and I were crammed like human sardines into the hard metal subway train called the Tung Chung **東涌綫** MTR (Metro Transit Railway) Line, and then we quickly transferred into the navy-hued and luxurious Disneyland Resort Line **迪士尼綫** MTR. The walls of this specially made train were covered with velvet-like materials, and the seats with soft, plush cushions; there was a large sculpture of Mickey Mouse garbed as a wizard encased in a glass case with stars that were scattered everywhere. The Mickey Mouse in the case here mainly evokes Mickey's appearance in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* segment of *Fantasia*. Welcome to the Disney use of space with *feng shui* -water and wind in Cantonese, (風水) elements. This

is a distinctive example of both Disneyfied and sinicized space. Sincized or Chinese influenced space elements is when non-Han Chinese adopt Chinese cultural, consumption and socio-cultural practices.

Before the creation of Hong Kong Disneyland, Disney had never so extensively integrated its own space requirements with the Chinese study of environmental balance called *feng shui* (風水). I argue that Hong Kong Disney is trying to sincerely indigenize space by using *feng shui* although the people that I interviewed did not know about this practice. In many parts of Asia *feng shui* is used by local homes and businesses to bring luck, harmony, and wealth. One particular controversy about the Disney Resort MTR line is that it was a line that built for specifically Disneyland and only led there. There has not been another MTR line that only went to one non-government-owned place.

Feng Shui (風水): 5 Elements of Wood, Metal, Water, Earth, Fire

Feng shui is a traditional Asian design concept that is supposed to bring synchronization and serenity to the household. Originally *feng shui* was used in ancient China for house, city, and burial siting, but it evolved to encompass many other architectural features. The principles of *feng shui* include everything from how you build your house to how everything is placed inside the house. They can also include numbers, colors, shapes, and sounds. For Chinese businesses, *feng shui* is a crucial element for attracting business and protecting the business against revenue loss. Traditionally the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water must be used throughout the area in exact

accordance with specific placement principles. If the space is not in the proper configuration, one risks bringing bad luck and ruin to one's household or business. After we got off the Disneyland Resort Line MTR, my family and I looked up to see that we still needed to climb a large flight of stairs or take the escalator to reach park level. This was by design. A Disney engineer told me that Walt Disney wanted a space that "guests" could not look out of and bystanders could not look into. It had to feel *magical*. "They [Disney] say [they must have] trees in two rows. They must be special trees; then you need the right soil mix for these trees," said one Disney engineer, who later explained that Hong Kong Disneyland had to spend millions of dollars, importing trees to line the park for the guests. Trees, rocks, and water are specifically placed throughout the park to fulfill the five *feng shui* elements of space.

Feng Shui (Space) 5 Element Table 1

FIRE: 消防	In one of the premier HKDL Chinese restaurants, there is a television screen that displays "fire." This is projected on the wall in the bar, which is supposed to balance the five elements.
EARTH: 地球	There are rocks throughout the park to bring the <i>feng shui</i> elements of permanence. This means the structure will stay for a long time.

In the middle of Inspiration Lake there is a rocky area with some foliage.

WATER:
水 "Lakes, ponds, and streams are placed throughout Hong Kong Disneyland to encourage good luck, fortune, and wealth for the resort, and a large fountain featuring classic Disney characters welcomes guests at the entrance to the park and to provide good luck." (New York Times, April 25, 2005)

METAL:
的金屬 The park sold several gold Mickey and Minnie coins and figurines. The tourism advertisements featured an ancient junk boat made out of gold, symbolizing Hong Kong. It had two Mickey heads on the two sails. One can even buy a golden Mickey or Minnie pulling an ancient pulley.

WOOD:
木 According to good *feng shui* ideals, trees should be plentiful. The Chinese restaurants at Hong Kong Disneyland sport numerous wooden features such as room dividers. There are many trees both within the park's

"lands" and in the surrounding area.

Without words or direction, my family and I instantly started to run as fast as we could, holding one another's hands. We passed under the large green Hong Kong Disneyland welcome gate with red lettering that reads "Welcome to Hong Kong Disneyland." It has a specific *feng shui* element in that it is tilted along a north/south direction line and shifted to a 12 degree angle to achieve maximum good fortune and not let the luck wash out into the sea. (*The New York Times*, April 25, 2005). The whole of Hong Kong Disneyland was specifically sited on Lantau island in Penny Bay because it was considered an auspicious and energy producing area by local experts. Propitious areas always have a lot of water, rocks, and hills. The hills should always be behind you and the sea in front of you, and Hong Kong Disneyland was built from these principles.

Feng Shui Colors: Red, Blue, Green, White

As we passed through the turnstiles, we heard the Disney "cast members" speaking a trio of languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. They were wearing railroad-type uniforms. Some of the cast members give us the emotional labor of the Disney smile, but most did not (Hochschild 2012). Red is a lucky color in China, and it is no accident that the lettering on many of gates, posters, and signs are deep crimson. The dress of some of the Disney characters such as Minnie and Mickey Mouse were changed to reflect more of the local Cantonese Culture. Mickey is shown wearing a

traditional Mandarin red costume and Minnie is shown wearing a *qipao* which is a special Chinese red and gold dress used for ceremonious occasions. Much of the merchandise sold at the park has a combination of English lettering and Chinese characters on it.

We ran through a row of trees, which is a Disney space element designed to make us feel isolated. There are many rocks specifically placed throughout the park because they represent permanence to the ancient Chinese views on architecture. This is important because the partners of the theme park as successful and long running as the original Anaheim Disney. One element of permanence is metal and earth features which you can see when you immediately come to Hong Kong Disneyland. "Visitors are greeted at the entrance by a large bronze fountain with Mickey Mouse surfing on a jet of water sprouted by a whale." (Associated Press, 2005-09-07). The fountain was made to create a bend in the road to get more agreeable flow of *qi* (energy).

Feng Shui Color Table 2:

RED:	Red is the most propitious color and it is
紅色	often used in Chinese weddings.
	Throughout the park red is used as an
	accent in decorations. You can also see a
	lot of red colored objects in the Mainstreet
	USA Mid Town jewelry, toys, and clothes.
WHITE:	For Chinese, this is the color of death, and I
	could not find any building or space that

白色	was painted fully white, nor were fully white candles sold at the park
藍色	BLUE: This is a peaceful color that promotes harmony and deep thoughts. Blue is used throughout HKDL in the form of the water in fountains, Inspiration Lake, and man-made rivers. There are many picture-taking opportunities that incorporate a blue background.
環保	GREEN: This color is supposed to relax you and give you serenity. There are many trees throughout the park and also outside of the park. NOTE: There are no green hats sold in HKDL as the Chinese believe that a man who is wearing a green hat is signifying that his wife is having an affair. ^x

Disney Space Practices

Hong Kong Disneyland has two first class hotels that are based upon two idealized periods of the American past, the Art Deco Hollywood Hotel and the Victorian Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel. In *Designing Disney Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*, Karal Ann Marling (1998) recounts how Disney architecture is used to

evoke a nostalgic past that is sanitized and free of the actual inequality that characterized it. Alan Bryman, in *The Disneyization of Society* (2004), argues that "theming" is an important element of Disney space. First, each theme park is itself themed in that it has an overarching narrative unity. Disneyland was given the overall theme of celebrating America and its achievements in a magical place where people could leave the harsh realities of the outside world behind (Bryman 2004: 19). This is not exactly the case in Hong Kong Disneyland, in that there are daily verbal fights between Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese over queuing culture. Mainland Chinese do not line up at all when attending different events or places. It is normative to "cut" in line. They also employ public squatting and sometimes public urination, which are frowned upon in Hong Kong Disneyland. I have witnessed many episodes of fighting over these issues.

Second, each Disney theme park is divided into "lands," which have their own thematic coherence and integrity. The magic kingdoms are divided into the following main lands each with its own themes: Adventure land, Frontier Land, Tomorrowland (or Discovery Land), and Fantasyland (19). This special division of lands is identical in Hong Kong Disneyland, which is a direct copy of the original Anaheim site with some modifications. For one, it is much smaller and elite locals who are well traveled complain they did not understand the larger sized original Anaheim park, let alone behemoth EPCOT Disneyworld Park. Additionally many of the locals have been to the "magical" Tokyo Disneyland and were enthralled by it. In my interviews with them, they said the Hong Kong Disneyland was not as large, magical, or peaceful as the other theme parks.

The third level of theming at the Disney theme parks is the Disney company itself. Disney can call upon and deploy its reputation for providing magical experiences, especially those that are aimed at children, and the well-known stable of characters it has created and popularized throughout the globe. In a sense this is a form of reflexive theming but it is a much richer one than most organizations involved in such theming can enjoy, in that it extends beyond corporate logos and stylized architecture. For Disney, this additional layer of theming can be embodied in the costumed Mickey's, Snow White's and Buzz Lightyear's that populate the parks for photography and autograph sessions. (Bryman 2004:19)

This last space element is problematic to many Hong Kong Disneyland guests who, unlike their American counterparts, do not have generational knowledge of Disneyland. Elderly Hong Kong residents and Mainland Chinese tourists do not know the Disney stories. One of my middle aged interviewees recognized the *Winnie the Pooh* character and it is interesting to note that this ride is in English. The park overall does a great job of being a tri-lingual space in that Mandarin, Cantonese and English are often simultaneously conveyed to tourists. There are lines that are divided by these three languages. The shows linguistically accommodate many different English and Chinese publics.

Feng shui Numbers: 1-10

Numbers are important elements throughout Hong Kong Disneyland. The belief is that numbers can bring positive or negative energies and forces to the person or building. There are numbers that are lucky or doomed based on the sound in Cantonese or

Mandarin. The park was opened on September 12, 2005 because the *feng shui* consultant that Disney hired said that it would be a providential day to open a business. To many Americans, this date would be too close to 9/11 but according to the ancient Chinese text, *Yi Jing*- that was a propitious date for an opening.

The Chinese love lucky numbers, and Hong Kong Disneyland has plenty of them hidden in its design. Exactly 2,238 crystal lotuses decorate the Chinese restaurant at the Disneyland Hotel because in the local dialect of Cantonese, the numbers sound like the phrase "easily generate wealth." The main ballroom, where weddings are to be hosted, was designed to be 888 square meters -- another "wealthy" number. (Associated Press: 07-09-2005)

The park's hotels demonstrate how Disney has made a sincere attempt to indigenize to Chinese space norms. While the hotels have multiple floors, the number "4" for the fourth floor is nowhere to be seen. This is because in both Mandarin and Cantonese "4" is a homonym for "death." The Chinese pronunciation of 8 generates a sound similar to "fortune"; consequently, Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel measures precisely 888 square meters" (Associated Press 07-09-2005). There are also currently eight restaurants in the park.

Feng Shui Numerology Chart

ONE: yi	In Chinese it sounds like the word for
一	"honor" and is considered lucky.

TWO: er	Sounds similar to "sure". Two stands for
兩	"doubling up" (as in "double your happiness") and for symmetry. It is considered a good number.
THREE: san	Sounds like "growth" or "alive" and is
三個	therefore lucky.
FOUR: si	Sounds like "death," very unlucky unless
四個	combined with a favorable number.
FIVE: wu	Popular because it signifies balance. and
五年	when combined with 2, 4, 6, or 8, it is extremely auspicious because each pair of numbers is balanced.
SIX: liu	Similar to "wealth." Extremely popular.
六個	
SEVEN: qi	Sounds like Cantonese for "sure" -- a very

七個 fortunate or lucky number.

EIGHT: ba Sounds like "multiply" and represents good

八個 luck - a fertile number too, so if you desire many sons, live in a house with eight in the address.

NINE: jiu One of the luckiest as it sounds like the word

九 for "longevity" and "long life".

TEN: shi It implies completeness. It's not however

十年 particularly auspicious because it is a yin number.

Source: <http://thegeomancer.netfirms.com/numerology.htm>

After we watched the parade, the sky turned black very quickly. I was hesitant to buy an umbrella because they were very expensive, so my family quickly ducked into a store and pretended to browse. As I looked around, I was very surprised by the sales pitch of the workers in this particular store. The room was soothing and nice, and had many *feng shui* elements of fire, wood, metal, and earth. I immediately spotted gold and silver coins that

bore Mickey designs. There were several gold and silver coins being sold. I took pictures of them. As I was taking pictures, a woman came up to me and showed me the silver coin I was looking at. She then took out two 5X5 sheets of paper with rows and rows of three digit numbers on them. Some were crossed out and the sales person said that those coins with those serial numbers were already sold. I was very surprised when she showed me the sheets; I told her that I was just browsing. She said there were only 1000 made of this particular coin and that there were still lucky numbers left to be had. I was confused and asked her, "What do the numbers mean?"

She told me about number combinations that bring you luck. It is based on what the number sounds like in Cantonese or Mandarin

"294"

2 means "easy, love"

9 means "enough"

4 means "lucky"

I asked about a gift for my mom

She recommended "839"

8 means "long"

3 means "live"

9 mean "rich"

For health for my sister she recommended:

"498"

4 means "fortune"

9 means “enough”

8 means “long”

I asked for myself what would be good:

"453"

4 means “fortune”

5 means “myself”

3 means “longlife”

“811”

8 means “good”

11 means “double love together” (mutual love)

I came back to buy the silver framed coin Tigger and asked more questions and received many answers.

Conclusion

In terms of space indigenization Hong Kong Disneyland sincerely tries to indigenize by using *feng shui* to appeal to local Hong Kongers. Disney indigenizes to Chinese space to gain revenue and profit in the late capitalistic society of Hong Kong. Their attempt to indigenize the space, though sincere in having a trilingual park, is too superficial and does not take into account sophisticated Hong Kong tastes. This *feng shui* technique calls upon a specific use of building placement, color, and number. This is

seen throughout the park in the forms of colors, numbers, and building arrangements. Is space indigenization a success? My answer is both yes and no.

Hong Kong Disneyland itself was built on the reclaimed land of Penny Bay, Lantau which displaced and damaged the ecosystem.. Throughout this dissertation I argue that there is an ongoing culture conflicts between the different Chinese publics, which is being displayed in the park by the daily disputes between these parties. My interviewees indicated that Hong Kong Disneyland's space indigenization of *feng shui* did not matter to them. One said it is just for the benefit of the business and did not effect her. It might be argued that the *feng shui* practices seem unremarkable because they are the norm in East Asia. The indigenization of space via an ancient Chinese geomancy also just glosses over the other issues that my interviewees have with HKDL. Some of these issues concern the original unequal contract agreement to establish the park, labor violations, and disputes with Mainland Chinese tourists. One wonders if these *feng shui* initiatives are transparent corporate attempts to appease the local population? My Hong Kong interviewees did not buy it. On the other hand, the physical space construction is excellent and the quality of the construction is recognized as quite high. The hotels are impressive and are also five star constructions. The cleanliness of Disneyland is superior to many other Hong Kong businesses, hotels, and the restaurants in the hotel are first-rate; again according to my informants. So while there is a recognition that what is built is of excellent quality and is perhaps spatially culturally sensitive, those actions do not off set some of the problems that have Hong Kong SAR multiethnic residents have with the way the park is run and treatment of workers, local, and international visitors.

Labor Indigenization Complications

History of Hong Kong Labor & Connections to Hong Kong Disneyland

CHAPTER FIVE

On my second day in Hong Kong, two Hong Kong academics led me through the *Blade Runner*-esque maze of a Hong Kong city district. Arriving at a building a slender woman in her twenties, with black hair, greeted me warmly. She proceeded to relate to me her accounts of labor abuse within the Disney global labor force. This kind woman gave me a photo album to look at which contained blood-curdling images of Mainland Chinese Disney factory workers with limbs missing, skin gashes, who had suffered horrific industrial accidents. It was 2008, and I had to remind myself that labor conditions had not changed much for millions of young marginalized women in the Global South. Although this chapter does not focus on Mainland Chinese Disney factories, I do want to show that labor is all interconnected in the international commodity chain. This chapter looks at Hong Kong labor issues related to Disneyland in Hong Kong. The history of Hong Kong labor force related to Disney will be reviewed. It also touches on the labor violations that occurred before the park opened. It then goes through different theoretical sets and ends with the five different Hong Kong Disneyland worker voices. These workers include a union organizer, engineer, high level executive, middle manager, and dancer. As I noted in an earlier chapter, Hong Kong Disneyland was promoted to the people as a place that would employ five thousand local residents but that turns out not to

to have been the case. High executive level positions as well as performers have gone to non-Hong Kong locals. I argue that a true labor indigenization project is complicated by the fact of the need and the presence of an international, intra-national and transnational workforce. Additionally, there are varying perspectives of the international workers with the higher ranked expressing more positive feelings about their job than lower ranked and paid individuals. My interviews revealed that the high-level executive and middle manager said that they enjoyed their jobs more than the dancer and engineer. My labor interview subjects also said that they worked at Disney not because they loved the brand, rather they thought of it as just another job.

Hong Kong Labor History Related to Disney

All Disney workers located in Hong Kong and mainland China are influenced by capital's race to the bottom in search of cheap labor. Globalization has enabled corporations to pit different regions against one another, which forces individual countries to lower their environmental and labor standards. For example, Hong Kong used to be a manufacturing hub that employed many Hong Kong residents. These jobs moved to a cheaper labor site in southern China, which resulted in a lot of displacement of Hong Kong jobs. Hong Kong would never have been the "Tiger" state today if it were not on the backs of young women and girls who primarily worked in factories from the 1950s to the 1970s and were metaphorically sacrificed to raise the economic status of their families, and in turn, the whole city state of Hong Kong. Many of these very young women worked in factories that produced garments, plastic flowers, small radios, and

electronics. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Hong Kong had little to no labor rights for workers, and this very cheap labor helped lift Hong Kong out of obscurity and into the global financial center that it is today. In 1978, when China opened up its so-called “bamboo curtain” to the West, many of these factories transferred to Guangdong, China. This example represents one of the fastest deindustrialization cases in the world. In other words, in a very short time period, countless Hong Kong middle-aged factory workers were left unemployed when these jobs transferred to mainland China. These factory workers, who were not formally educated, felt abandoned and could not find further work. Many of these women had to emigrate out of Hong Kong to New York City where they became sweatshop workers there (Louie 2001). Other former female factory workers had to rely on their children’s support and, in doing so, may have lost some of their autonomy. There were also a lot of males in this same situation. Some of the former middle-aged male factory workers took jobs as doormen and security guards in Hong Kong. By the late 1980s, there were no more factories, leaving thousands of individuals unemployed. This was a complex, problematic, and vexing time for many in the Hong Kong workforce. Rey Chow argues that this is the time period when the Mainland Chinese government which she called “King Kong” was approaching to either takeover-(re)colonialize or liberate the people of Hong Kong. During this time many Hong Kong people were trying to leave Hong Kong by immigrating to the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia or any place that they could purchase citizenship. Aiwha Ong’s book *Flexible Citizenship* (1999) goes deeper into these phenomena of wealthy and middle-class Hong Kong residents seeking different passports to hedge their bets before

the 1997 takeover of Beijing China. Aiwaha Ong called these people Chinese Homo Economicus because they sought better economic circumstances. The decline of manufacturing jobs was accompanied by a decline in tourism. Hong Kong is limited in natural resources and has relied on international tourism, which dramatically declined after 9/11. The effect of 9/11 was that the overall global long distance travel declined significantly, which included travel to Hong Kong. The 1998 Asian economic crisis further negatively impacted the region. Mainland China was also opening up for international visitors and thus many tourists began opting to travel to Mainland China rather than Hong Kong (Choi 2010). The 2002-2003 SARS (Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome) scare, as well as the various Avian Flu's tarnished Hong Kong's image. Sum and Lo (2009) argue that these diseases also built up a picture of Hong Kong as a contagion site. All of these issues effected Hong Kong workers.

In order to understand the Hong Kong Disneyland worker, it is critical to see how this small geographic place, Hong Kong became a crucial node in today's international commodity chain. This chapter will review tourism and the creation of the Hong Kong Disneyland labor force. The project of HKDL was promoted by the political and business elite as a panacea for the high Hong Kong unemployment rate in the 1990s. The Hong Kong government said the park would provide five thousand jobs for indigenous Hong Kong workers. I define an indigenous worker as anyone born in Hong Kong or with a permanent resident status. Four of the five top executives comprising the workforce of Hong Kong Disneyland have been of Anglo American decent. On the other hand, the dancers, singers and performers were disproportionately from the Philippines

and the United States. My middle manager interviewee said that additional Mainland Chinese workers are being hired and this would continue in the future which significantly goes against the public government's rationale as to why the park was established, and against the story told to the Hong Kong public. This international, intra-national, and transnational labor force complicates the ability of Disney to achieve the hiring of a true indigenized labor force in Hong Kong. For example, the Hong Kong labor culture is distinct from the Disney work culture in its sense of space, time, and treatment. In addition, international laborers come with their own culturally appropriate notions of proper work behavior.

Labor Violations Prior to the Opening of Hong Kong Disneyland

Complaints about labor violations preceded the official opening of the park. The builders of the park, primarily Hong Kong indigenous workers, complained that they were being underpaid for their work. *The South China Morning Post* (2005) reported that a worker complained that the Disney Corporation did not pay them for some of their work, which resulted in a protest outside the Disney gates. Many Hong Kong residents became aware of these types of labor violations due to the constant negative publicity, including all of my interviewees. "In the SAR, we have heard how laborers at the site went on strike over working conditions; how protesters stood at the gates to make lucky-draw free-ticket preview winners aware of underpaid mainland Disneyland merchandise factory workers; and about how nightly firework displays would add toxic particles to Hong Kong's already over-polluted air, water, and visibility. A Food and Environmental

Department investigation was underway, following reports of unsatisfactory conditions at two food outlets.” (Dembina, September 13, 2005). This is an additional link to the complication of labor at Hong Kong Disneyland. It is important to note that the workers who built Hong Kong Disney claim that they were mistreated.

Like the Disney Corporation, the government was not forthcoming in responding to the local construction worker claims. This made some Hong Kong residents wary and feeling fooled by the promises of the project. Choi argues that Hong Kong labor laws are useless because the government tries to be “non-interventionist,” which insinuates that workers at Hong Kong Disneyland lack a strong legal footing for their complaints due to a lack of governmental support. Disney already has a long history of being anti-union and labor (Foglesong 2001). This connects directly to Hong Kong Disneyland workers who have been discouraged to unionize. Choi contends, “Disney brought Hong Kong a physical park, non-transparent values and related management practices.” (Choi 2011). Disney could not control the major initial negative publicity about labor improprieties that these construction workers brought to light.

Cultural Studies and Globalization Theory

In this study, I utilized postcolonial, globalization, and cultural studies theory to center and guide my data analysis. Globalization is another useful tool in this examination. Globalization, as defined by Leslie Skair (1999) in *Competing Conceptions of Globalizations*, engages and defines four approaches: the world-systems approach, the global culture approach, the global society approach, and the global capitalism approach.

Christopher Chase-Dunn advocates the world systems approach. He argues that there is a transnational division of labor. Countries are divided into core, semi-periphery, and periphery regions. Core countries are the United States, Europe and Japan. Semi-peripheral countries include China, Mexico, Iran, and Brazil. There is a long list of peripheral countries, such as Croatia, Kenya, and Cambodia. This theory is similar to dependency theory, which argues that core countries often take advantage of labor and resources of semi-peripheral and peripheral countries. This is linked to Hong Kong Disneyland because American companies obtain very cheap labor to manufacture its products in mainland China. SACOM (2008, 2010) has made many claims of sweatshop abuse claim against Disney companies in China.

The second approach looks at identities and how they might be shaped. “The global culture approach focuses on the problems that a homogenizing mass media-based culture poses for national identities” (Sklair 1999: 151). I witnessed many disputes between mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong tourists. One wonders if there is nascent regionalism or identity politics on the part of Hong Kong locals beneath the clashes? Or is it simply class and ethnic disputes between different Chinese publics? Theorists such as Giddens (1991), Harvey (1989) and Robertson (1992) make a case that the twentieth century has brought a new global awareness that we did not have previously. They also contend that the nation state has decreased in power, while corporations have become more powerful. As an example, Disney is one of the leading global corporations in the world and has a revenue stream that is greater than some countries. This approach puts capitalism in the forefront of analysis. Leslie Sklair argues that transnational corporations

and transnational capitalists have no allegiance to any country besides capital. “The transnational corporation (TNC) is the most important institution for economic transnational practices; the transnational capitalist class (TCC) for political transnational practices; and the culture-ideology of consumerism for transnational cultural-ideological practices” (Ibid 158). Some argue that these corporations have a colonializing effect.

The Disney transnational corporation arrived in Hong Kong which was previously colonized by Great Britain for over 100 years. Scholars have also examined how Disney colonizes local space and labor (Koris et al 2012, Giroux and Pollock 2012). Colonialism frames my study of both Hong Kong and Disney in that Hong Kong has been a British colony for over one hundred years. The implication of a Disney-Hong Kong partnership is that Hong Kong, unlike autonomous states, was ripe to be taken advantage of in the present by Disney as they were in the past by Great Britain. Postcolonial studies inform my findings because it illustrates how the long lasting and continual colonization of a space persists even once de jure colonization has ended. Albert Memmi (1965) asserts “economic privilege is at the heart of the colonizers.” There are other privileges of colonialism, but making a profit off the colonies is the central goal. Hong Kong would not have been colonized had it not been a port to export goods out of China. Today it remains one of the busiest ports in the world. Memmi argues that there is no such thing as “good or bad” colonizers; all colonizers are bad. Many of these categories, I argue can also apply to the exploitation of labor both in Hong Kong and in the mainland. For example, Hong Kong’s exploitative labor practices between the 1950s and 1980 were crucial to the worldwide production of cheap and accessible apparel. From

the 1980s on, however, the global apparel factory has been relocated to mainland China where some of the goods are made for global markets including those in the United States such as Wal-Mart.

American cultural studies theorists, drawing from Micheal DeCerteau, have also focused on workers' resistance to their work situations. I rarely, if ever, saw Hong Kong Disneyland workers enacting the Disney way, which is Alan Bryman calls "emotional labor." Alan Bryman (2004) argues that everything is now "homogenized" including consumption, labor, and goods. The direction of homogenization is western, specifically americanized forms of fast food (which leads to poor diet), emotional labor (the need to smile constantly), the body (the global obesity epidemic), artificial/simulacra settings, and instant gratification. Hong Kong Disneyland workers seldom smiled, but spent a lot of time texting, which is directly against the company rules. The three Disney Filipino dancers that I interviewed complained of unequal treatment, and they all eventually quit. The two former Disney engineers that I interviewed stated that they would never work for Disney again. These actions seemed to me resistance to the Disney proscribed rules of behavior. Robin Kelley might call these everyday cultural acts "resistance." In *Race Rebels* (1996), he demonstrates how fast food workers who arrived late or stole cultural artifacts (i.e., French fries) were resisting their low economic status as inner city wageworkers. People stole cultural artifacts to demonstrate resistance within the greater structural system without overtly overthrowing the system. These workers did not openly revolt, but engaged in non-work activities such as writing love letters during company time that could be considered "resistance." James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1987)

demonstrated this most illustratively. Overt and covert resistances occur in the park labor pool through protests, quitting and not following protocol.

Micheal De Certeau foregrounds the importance of “everyday acts” that illuminate important worker stories and resistances which can apply to HKDL. “Not all managers have been trained in the Disney way and have unreal expectations of their employees, often urging them to go above and beyond their duties, while the managers themselves wouldn’t do the same” (Choi 2009). A fair number of employees worked terribly long shifts with no guarantee of a break or scheduled lunch period, all while being underpaid. Of course this is globally subjective as these workers make more money than third world country workers. All three of the Filipino interview informants said they were mistreated and quit their dancer positions. I witnessed one Hong Kong Disneyland worker making fun of guests by talking about them in a different language. In other instances I saw workers use their smart phones while working and not answer questions fully about locations. In one case, I was stunned to overhear a Hong Kong Disneyland employee say, “Have a Magical Day”! This phrase was rarely used at Hong Kong Disneyland, while it is a required standard response from all employees in the U.S. parks.

There is even a viral YouTube video, presumably taken by a Hong Kong Disney worker of a Mainland Chinese tourist trying on different Disney clothes while in the Disney store. This intentional video that was uploaded to YouTube shows the seemingly Hong Kong Disneyland worker laughing at the Mainland Chinese tourists behavior.

Hong Kong Disneyland: The Creator of local HK employment opportunities and revenue

“The government, which itself invested US\$3 billion into Disneyland, also says the opening of the park generated 18,400 jobs here.”
(Dembina September 13, 2005)

Hong Kong Disneyland was predicted to generate profits of \$19 billion in 40 years and bring in more than 5.6 million visitors. Neither of these predictions have come to fruition, but many jobs were created. ”With a huge amount of investment and multitudes of support, the HKSAR government estimated the creation of 16,000 jobs during construction of the park and 18, 400 jobs for the routine operation of the park”
(quoted in Tsang, Lee, Wong, & Chong 2012)

Labor activists charged Disney is forcing staff to work 11- and 13-hour days, providing inadequate breaks and rewriting daily work schedules without notice. ‘Their management is very backward,” says Elaine Hui of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, which is trying to organize Disneyland workers into a union.’ (“Miscues Mar Opening of Hong Kong Disney,” Paul Wiseman, *USA Today*, 11/9/2005)

Before Hong Kong Disneyland opened to the public on September 12, 2005, Food and Environmental Department health inspectors were forced to remove their badges when they came into the park because they worried that they would alarm the guests. Standard Disney regulations -- such as no beards, colored hair, long hair, ethnic hair or cell phone use -- were in place. A major issue for some Hong Kong Disney workers was that they

were “given only 15 minutes rest time every four hours, whereas their US counterparts rest after two.” (Dembina 2005)

Hong Kong Tourism

Critics often note that sport stadiums and other components of the tourist’s infrastructure rarely pay for themselves. Public officials and civic booster do not care if they do. This apparently cavalier attitude toward taxpayers’ money can be explained by noting the general irrelevance-to city officials and civic boosters of cost-benefit analyses of tourism infrastructure. The attitude of public officials toward development projects had “little to do with the... profitability...of the project” and far more to do with the vision officials share concerning the overall direction a city is taking.”[sic] *Constructing the Tourist Bubble*, (2004) Dennis R. Judd

Judd argues that tourism has often been used by governments to create jobs when hard industries, such as manufacturing factories have left. Sharon Bohn Gmelch stated that tourism is very important to the global economy. “Tourism employed 1 in every 12 workers and accounted for 11% of the global national product (GDP)” (4) Tourism matters because of the economic, political, cultural, and social scale in which producers and consumers are put into contact with each other. I argue that the Hong Kong theme park project was a development project that was pushed for because of the previous economic and social difficulties in the 1980s and 1990’s. Sklair (2002) argues that transnational labor was too weak to combat the transnational capitalistic class that brokered the deal for Hong Kong Disney. He further argues that malls and theme park spaces are key symbols of consumer capitalism. “Even if the surrounding area is decaying, it doesn’t matter because these spaces are for expatriates”(Sklair, 2002). The

other big Hong Kong governmental investment was the financial hub titled Cyber port, which was not successful.

Assorted Images of Hong Kong

The island of Hong Kong has made a global impression in its kaleidoscope of images, symbols, and signs since the mid-eighteenth century. Chris Rojek's theory of indexing and dragging can help to explain the recent successes and failures of this tourist site. No more can we anthropologists and global citizens view a space as separate and mechanical, but we must accept the realities of interconnections, ironies, and contradictions that are brought on by indexical and dragging knowledge. This is because it affects the bottom line in businesses, but also the reception by local inhabitants. Rojek argues that when you come into a new space such as a tourist spot you "drag" knowledge of that place from your past. For example, even though you have never been to the Eiffel tower, you have seen it countless times in movies and other media. So when you finally go the Eiffel tower it is not exactly the first time you have seen it which could be both a good and bad thing. One person might feel bored or unimpressed to see the Eiffel tower because they have seen it before in countless films. That is because these people bring their own images that they had of the place into the presumably "new" experience. For Hong Kong and Disneyland there is a lot of dragging by local and international guests because of the plethora of bad publicity of labor violations, protests, and riots. It is important to note that Hong Kong has also been linked to global diseases

In the 1960's Hong Kong has held an image of being a "gateway to China." In the 1980s it has also marketed itself as a "East meets West" and shopping paradise. Hong

Kong, like other cities has also tried to market and sell itself as a site of play (Judd and Fainstein 1999). It was not unusual in the 1980s to see Hong Kong advertisements that highlight scenes of kids playing at tourist sites like Ocean Marine Park. Hong Kong has also been depicted as a vacation spot. This all abruptly changed in 1997 and beyond. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) showed on global television sets of Hong Kong people being infected and dying from the disease. This turned the global image of Hong Kong into a site of fear especially for travelers (Sum and So 2004). Now Hong Kong was in the media for being an important node in the transmission of deadly diseases. Nightly international television viewers were inundated with images of Hong Kong people wearing masks for protection. There were nightly news reports of Hong Kong residents and international visitors dying from SARS. When coupled with the broad Asian economic crisis, Hong Kong became a site of fear in the global imagination.

Hong Kong Disneyland was supposed to rehabilitate this image, but the theme park also had public relations mishaps. This worked against the amelioration of Hong Kong image to the locals in that some felt they were not told the full truth. Hong Kong Disneyland did not respond swiftly to address its labor abuse allegations, which was very widely reported. I had quite a few interviewees who referred to the Hong Kong Disneyland labor abuse claims. So when residents of Hong Kong come to the park, they might have this in the back of their minds. This affects how locals enjoy the park. Below

are the interviews with several Hong Kong Disneyland employees and their experiences. These interviews illustrate the different ways the park is perceived by its workers.

Summary of Race, Class, Age of Hong Kong Disneyland Workers

In this section I highlight five individuals connected to Hong Kong Disneyland although the media has reported there are over 5,000 Disney workers directly or indirectly employed by the theme park. All the individuals that I interviewed were in their 30's except the SACOM representative that was in her late 20s. The first is Middle Manager, Mr. Lam, a middle class Hong Kong SAR resident and college graduate. He grew-up in a working class background. The Hong Kong Disneyland Engineer, Mr. Liu, is an upper class Hong Kong SAR resident that attended an elite college. Mr. Liu comes from a working class background in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Disneyland Dancer, Mr. Reyes, was trained in several dancing styles in the Philippines and would be considered middle class there. The Hong Kong Disneyland Cast Member and Union Organizer, Mr. Chen, is also a college graduate and comes from a working class background. The SACOM Public Relations Representative, Ms. Yang is also a college graduate and comes from a working class background. There are two unions: Cast Members Union and the Confederation of Trade Union that are involved with the Hong Kong Disney workers. Disney theme parks also offer their own in-house union that they offer to their employees. SACOM (Students and Scholars Against Corporate Mismanagement) is an ally to the Cast Member's Union and is closely tied to Disney Hunters. Disney Hunters is a secretive organization that advocates aggressively for the

social justice rights of Disney workers in Hong Kong and mainland China. This might come in the form of worker information support, protests, worker campaigns, media publicity, and picketing actions.

Hong Kong Disneyland Middle Manager 38 years old: Mr. Lam

Mr. Lam was born in Hong Kong and has been working in the entertainment industry for over fifteen years. His parents and grandparents were born in Guangdong, China. His parents left for Hong Kong 1949 to flee the Communist forces that were taking over mainland China. He comes from a working class background and knew nothing of Disney until age 12. He felt that Hong Kong Disneyland suited his cultural needs in terms of food and space. The *feng shui* made no difference to him as a worker which is important to note that this was not effective. He had no opinion about whether or not Hong Kong Disneyland was a good building site for Hong Kong. It did not matter to him where the theme park was located nor did he care if it was a cultural site. Mr. Lam has never liked American cartoons or popular culture. As a manager at Hong Kong Disneyland, he stated that the majority of worker hires were locals and were treated well.

Mr. Lam asserted that visitors to Hong Kong Disneyland were mostly from Mainland China and that there were tensions between local Hong Kong residents and mainland Chinese. “Mainland Chinese tourists are different from Hong Kong tourists in

terms of culture, attitude, and manners” said Mr. Lam. He continued, “Maybe HK tourist are cleaner and neater; mainland tourists are the opposite of Hong Kong tourists.” He stated that people of all ages worked for HKDL. Some worked because it was Disney, preferring to work there because of the company’s Western branding. Mr. Lam stated that, for him, working at Hong Kong Disneyland was simply an opportunity for advancement. “The offer was good and not the same as my other Hong Kong jobs.” He relayed that Disney’s work culture is quite different from Hong Kong work culture. Disney has multiple guidelines and a strong commitment their work culture. Medical coverage was also an incentive for him to take the job, which he learned of through a job listing in the newspaper.

Mr. Lam maintained that the majority of the workers were Chinese from Hong Kong and that there were very few American employees. He says there are also mainland Chinese and Filipino workers. “Filipino workers are employed in the area of entertainment, they can dance and sing better than locals,” said Mr. Lam. He stated that in the future there would be a tendency to get more workers from Mainland China. They were cheaper laborers than the Hong Kong residents. Because the mainland worker can cross the border to go home, a housing provision was unnecessary. Filipino workers, on the other hand, were more expensive to hire. The pay rate for Filipino workers was higher than for Mainland Chinese. Mr. Lam also communicated some of the negatives of working at Disney, specifically the superiority complex that some in management had. He also stated that there are workers who feel they are treated unfairly. I asked Mr. Lam

a series of questions about the proposed new Shanghai Disneyland, which is tentatively scheduled to open in 2015-2016.

JB: What do you think about the future Shanghai Disneyland?

Mr. Lam: It will be against Hong Kong Disneyland and culture of the two parks will be very different. In the future Shanghai Disneyland will be run by the Chinese, by the Mainland government, Beijing.

JB: hmm

Mr. Lam: The management style -- how to handle a problem, is quite different. I am very sure. Most of us didn't think they are against us. I think tourists might come to Hong Kong Disney, and they might not come to Shanghai Disneyland.

JB: Why?

Mr. Lam: The HKDL service is provided well – covers how to talk to a guest. When a guest asks you something, you try yourself to serve them. When you go to China and you ask [the mainland Chinese] a question- if it is the Mainland Chinese first reaction is 'it is impossible but here at Hong Kong Disneyland we will tell you it is possible. [Interview: 1-19-10]

Summary and Significance of Interview

Mr. Lam makes many pertinent points about Hong Kong Disneyland labor. For one, he asserts that the majority of workers are local. He said that as a Hong Kong Disneyland Chinese middle management worker he was treated well, but he felt the American Disney managers felt superior to local workers. To keep prices low, he suspected that Hong Kong Disneyland would continue to hire Mainland workers. He also suggested that there were not enough local dancers among the 8 million people who populate Hong Kong, so Disney would outsource those jobs to the Philippines. He also

stated there are tensions between the mainland tourist and Hong Kong Tourists. He likes his job and thinks that the workers are treated well. He did think there would be some competition from Shanghai Disneyland, but that mainland Chinese Disneyland will not measure up according to him. He argues Hong Kong Disneyland workers know how to talk to customers and try to make them happier than the workers at Shanghai Disneyland will. This Hong Kong Disneyland manager very much knows the global push and pull of labor because he talks about how more and more Mainlander Chinese will take over future Hong Kong Disneyland jobs. Of course this is not something that local Hong Kong workers would like to hear as the park was sold to them as a place for indigenous labor.

Hong Kong Disneyland Engineer 34 years old: Mr. Liu

Mr Liu is one of the many Hong Kong Disneyland engineers who worked in the park, and who witnessed the many stages it went through during its development. He knew about Disney as a child and had visited all the Disney parks throughout the world. He felt the food and drink did not suit his cultural needs. He does not care about the *feng shui* aspects of the park. This is important because it correlates to what local Hong Kong residents also feel. Several millions of dollars were spent to *feng shui* the park and make it culturally appropriate in its food offerings. Furthermore, Mr. Liu did not believe Hong Kong Disneyland had proper labor practices. Mr. Liu cited that he was very well aware

that the costumed workers did not get breaks and were not treated well. He also mentioned the environmental controversy about the building of the park.

Mr. Liu also stated that Shanghai Disney would not bring good things to Hong Kong Disneyland. I asked about his feelings toward his employment and he said that Disney had a lot of “wants.” They wanted the exact infrastructure and design that they had planned. All the landscape design was by Disney. The Hong Kong government selected the environmentally controversial Penny Bay for the site of the park, and gave it to Disney for free. Mr. Liu stated that the building of the park was a huge job with a tight time frame as Penny Bay had no roads or infrastructure. It was also controversial because many fish were destroyed in the process. “Wo um swoi bei chieng to Disneyland” [I won’t give any more money to Disneyland]. He indicated that he had gone to HKDL for free on several occasions and never ate a thing. Mr. Liu went to the Hong Kong Disneyland Halloween party and was very disappointed. He said that Ocean Park’s and Tokyo Disney’s Halloween was much better in execution. The Hong Kong taxpayer has already given enough to Disney. The partnership is not even!” I asked him why he felt taxpayers like himself had been duped.

JB: Why?

Mr. Liu: They ask for a lot of things and use the [Hong Kong resident] taxpayer’s money. For example the infrastructure outside of Disneyland is what we all paid for. And all those trees, as simple as those trees!

JB: Okay

Mr. Liu: It [the specific trees] had to be all over Disneyland and all the structures outside are all paid by the Hong Kong

government and taxpayers. We, the Hong Kong people paid for it all.

JB: Yes

Mr. Liu: The wants of Disney -- we were just working together but they acted like they are superior- just like the trees—you just want to create such a atmosphere – all the trees have to be specific, and you cannot find these trees—all the way from US or SE Asia or from somewhere. These special kinds of trees are very expensive. Then you have to consider soil mix which is complicated. . . lots of trial to build those things.

JB Was Hong Kong Disneyland a good construction project for the state of Hong Kong? People?

Mr. Liu: Yes, it is First Class. It is a Rolls Royce construction. The roads, signs, landscape for construction. We paid but maybe we need just a Honda Civic. It was too high of a cost.
[Interview 8-25-09]

Summary and Significance of Interview:

Mr. Liu is a taxpayer and one of the Hong Kong Disney engineers. He felt that the government had spent too much of the taxpayers' money on Hong Kong Disneyland. On the other hand, as an engineer, he noted that the construction was very sound. He was upset that the people of Hong Kong, rather than Disney, had paid 90% for this theme park. He emphasized that Disney executives thought of their corporation as the more important partner and had lots of demands. One such demand was that numerous specific trees had to be imported into Hong Kong to surround Hong Kong Disneyland. Hong Kong Disneyland had specific space demands in that no one could look into and guests cannot look out of Hong Kong Disneyland. In all, one of the goals of the Disneyland architecture was to make guests feel like they were in a fantasyland. Because of this, one

of the core mandates was that the park be enclosed. In my analysis of this interview, I note that this upper middle class Hong Kong Disney engineer was disgruntled with the superior nature of American Disney engineers and executives. There is a Disney egalitarian rhetoric but the de facto hierarchy in the Hong Kong Disney arrangement is revealing. The Hong Kong Disney partnership was not an equal relationship between American and Hong Kong engineers even though the HK government paid for most of the park.

Hong Kong Disneyland Dancer 29 years old: Mr. Reyes

Mr. Reyes was born in the Philippines in the 1980s and didn't become interested in Disney cartoons until he was eleven years old. He applied to Hong Kong Disneyland because he wanted to perform. He knew many types of dance, including hip hop, ballet, and jazz. His two-day audition and interview for Disney took place in the Philippines at The Music School of Ryan Cayabyab, where he was told to "Help bring the magic to life!" To audition for Disney, you had to be at least 18 years old. The audition took 2 hours, during which he was asked to perform several routines. I asked him what the interview process was like, and he said it was hard. He said that the Disney representatives taught you a routine, with which you had to audition. There were 200 - 400 people who tried out over 2 days and they hired around 50 to 200 people for each show. Mr. Reyes said that the ethnic composition of the Hong Kong Disney labor force was primarily Chinese, Filipino, and American. He said that he danced in the Lion King

and the Golden Mickey shows at Hong Kong Disneyland. He said it was hard work and the workers were not treated equally.

JB: All the workers treated the same?

Mr. Reyes: No. Americans have a housing allowance and sometimes a free house. Contract the same: same — wakeup 7am and work til the show is over.

JB: Is the contract the same for everyone? Do Filipino workers have a different contract?^{xi}

Mr. Reyes: Same.

JB: What do you like and dislike working at Hong Kong Disneyland?

Mr. Reyes: Like: Friends. Dislike: not fair management-ways.

JB: Such as?

Mr. Reyes: Dislike the system -- there is some discrimination in treatment. It is not fair! There is more attention to the Chinese. For example, Filipino dancers get more “runs” [performances] than Chinese dancers. Filipinos sometimes have to dance 4 or 5 runs when the Chinese get only 2 runs. [Interview: 11-10-09]

Summary and Significance of the Interview:

The interview with the Mr. Reyes, the Filipino dancer, revealed that he felt grateful about having had a job with Disney but not about the way he was treated by the management. He explained that he was treated differently from the other Chinese and American employees. Mr. Reyes along with some of his fellow dancers resigned from his job. He mentioned that his contract was the same as the dancers of other nationalities. This problematizes what the Cast members Union Organizer Mr. Chen, as well as another Hong Kong Disneyland researcher told me, who negotiates for the rights

of the Hong Kong Disneyland workers and is privy to salary information. I never asked interviewers for their salary information. One could argue here that workers are not privy to salary information of other workers or that Mr. Reyes is correct in that there is no contract difference that he knew of. What he could see on the ground was how he was unequally treated in comparison to other dancers based on ethnicity. One very specific inequality that Mr. Reyes saw was that the other Filipino dancers had to dance multiple “runs” while the Chinese and American dancers did not. I interviewed two other Filipino dancers independently, and they also confirmed these inequalities. To analyze this interview I would argue that Mr. Reyes comments of being treated unequally are not unusual in Hong Kong Disneyland or Hong Kong. There are many Southeast Asian workers, particularly Filipino and Indonesian domestic servants who are not treated fairly in Hong Kong. It is interesting to note that even though Disney is an “American” company that it continues the very particular ethnic based hierarchical treatment in Hong Kong Disneyland.

Hong Kong Disneyland Cast Member and Union Organizer 34 years old: Mr. Chen

At 9 am on September 8, 2009, Mr. Chen, an organizer of the Hong Kong Disney Cast Members Union distributed flyers at the entrance of Disneyland Park while Hong Kong Disneyland workers scurried in from the MTR - Metro Train Station. The sun blazed overhead, and there was no shade. Only the employees knew about this entrance, although sometimes Mainland Chinese tourists entered, thinking it is an entrance. He would say in Mandarin or Cantonese to tourists that his flyers were for employees only.

Whenever he saw an employee, he would switch back to Cantonese or English, saying “We are a Hong Kong union, please take a flyer.” Some employees displayed a palm out to say wordlessly that they were not interested. Others took the flyer and shoved it into their bags, while still others put their heads down and quickly walked past him.

One of the Hong Kong Disney Cast Members Union main tasks is helping the workers through organizing. In order to organize, there were two duties they performed every day. The first thing the union did was casework, taking staff complaints and recording their labor disputes. They then filed these complaints with the Disney Company. Following this, a long-term bargaining period commenced between the union and the company. The union also organized for membership in order to build up the union's collective bargaining status, which was a very long-term project and the most difficult work. This was difficult because there is not a strong union culture in either Disney or Hong Kong. The unions could only achieve this feat if they recruited new members, encouraged them to take collective action, generated pressure toward the company, and mediated in various company policies that were thought to be unfair.

On January 9, 2010, Hong Kong Disneyland revealed that it had a net loss of 4.4 billion (HKD) for the three years leading to October 2010 (Yi 2010). This led to many staff policy changes. For example, Mr. Chen stated that fireworks employees were denied the overtime pay that they previously had received from Hong Kong Disneyland. Another casualty was the drastic reduction in sick pay from twelve to four days a year. A Hong Kong Disneyland spokesman said that the policy still meant “four more days of paid sick

leave than required by Hong Kong labour laws.” (Yi 2010). These episodes got a lot of negative media attention. The union argued that front-line workers had to be outside where it was very hot and humid. This could also be very stressful and lead to more illness. Mr. Chen had many concerns for the different Disney workers. He also argued that other Disneyland’s had better sick leave policies than Hong Kong Disneyland.

SACOM Public Relations Representative 27 years old: Ms. Yang

The social justice group, SACOM (Students and Scholars Against Corporate Mismanagement), was founded in 2005 to ensure that companies followed local laws and a code of conduct. They wanted to eliminate sweatshops in China by empowering workers to monitor factories themselves. The Disney factories in Mainland China were among the factories for which they advocated. Professors and their graduate students, mainly from social science departments, founded this organization with over 100 international scholar advisors. Edna Bonacich, famous labor theorist was one of these advisors and she introduced me to this group. To build trust, I discussed my fieldwork with this organization. I told SACOM about my past research on sweatshops in El Monte, California. Many social justice groups and unions trusted me, and I felt immediate solidarity with them. This collective of both Hong Kong locals and academics pushed for social justice for workers. They demanded fair pay, human rights, and safety regulations for workers. SACOM believes that Hong Kong Disneyland has not been good for the people of Hong Kong. Although it did hire local workers, it then failed to treat them well. Furthermore, they believed that Shanghai Disney would not bring good

things to Hong Kong Disneyland either. I interviewed two SACOM members in 2009 and 2010. Both were female and had academic affiliations with various universities.

JB: What do you think about Disneyland in general?

Ms. Yang: I think about Mickey Mouse. When I grew up I was exposed to the [Disney] labor rights. [practices] There are the Christian Industrial industries and SACOM that look at work-related issues in Disney.

JB: hmmm?

Ms. Yang: There was the period in the opening when there was inhumane treatment, The Disney workers who dressed up as characters had to wear the costumes for a long time. The characters cannot go home in costumes but hide in the MTR.

JB: hmm

Ms. Yang: In 1997 many Hong Kong people desperately wanted to improve the economic situation. We must have a lot of land restoration. It was an unfair agreement with the Hong Kong government. The Hong Kong government must invest a lot of money, but we do not have a lot of sovereignty. We think the agreement is unfair. Disney has no transparency about what they earn ...in these processes Hong Kong citizens cannot voice their concern.

JB: Why was Hong Kong Disneyland built in Hong Kong?

Ms. Yang: I think it was the financial crisis in 1997. It was not something from the people, the ordinary people. [They Government needs to] generate more work opportunities...[SACOM representative Interview 12-8-09]

SACOM organized a few protests a year and occasionally worked with a group called Disney Hunters. Disney Hunters was an anonymous group that also fought against labor injustice at the Disney factory sites, particularly in mainland China. The Confederation of Trade Union also works with Hong Kong Disneyland workers. SACOM members further stated that there is no transparency on earnings and on future developments of the

site. Ms. Yang also said that Hong Kong citizens cannot voice their concerns. The following is SACOM's mission statement, which is important to my study because they are major labor rights organization that has a affiliation with Disney Cast Member Union.

SACOM Mission Statement:

Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) is a new nonprofit organization founded in Hong Kong in June 2005. SACOM originated from a students' movement devoted to improving the labor conditions of cleaning workers and security guards under the outsourcing policy. The movement attained relative success and created an opportunity for students to engage in local and global labor issues. SACOM aims at bringing concerned students, scholars, labor activists, and consumers together to monitor corporate behavior and to advocate for workers' right. We believe that the most effective means of monitoring is to collaborate closely with *workers* at the workplace level. We team up with labor NGOs to provide in-factory training to workers in South China. Through democratic elections, we support worker-based committees that can represent the voices of the majority of workers. Source: <http://sacom.hk/mission>

Summary and Significance of the Interview:

SACOM felt that the Hong Kong government needed to generate more work opportunities and that Tung Chee Hwa, the former top Hong Kong politician pushed to build Hong Kong Disneyland after the 1997 handover to China. This organizational representative also stated that the park was too small. They also showed me a very graphic photo album of industrial accidents from Disney factories in mainland China. As a labor rights organization, SACOM wanted Disney to further build code of labor conduct in its factories and apply it globally. They wanted to see this advanced code applied in every country to make it more meaningful. They also wanted Disney to conduct labor rights training to encourage sustainability rather than just adopt a "cut and run" policy, under which Disney would create a factory and then leave immediately if

labor protests ensued. Lastly, they demanded that Disney reveal their list of suppliers for the purpose of transparency. This interview reveals that there are local activists are advocating for fair work conditions for Disney workers in Hong Kong and mainland China. There is a direct connection between Hong Kong Disney workers and mainland Chinese Disney factories. This interview shows the cross regional organizing and that there are many in Hong Kong that are concerned with their fellow local worker rights.

Conclusion

Hong Kong Disneyland was promoted to the Hong Kong people to employ indigenous or local labor. The Asian financial crisis of 1998 and the 2003 SARS outbreak took a negative toll on the workers of Hong Kong in that it reduced job opportunities. Hong Kong Disneyland was supposed to fill the economic void when the small industries had left. The facts show that Hong Kong Disneyland did provide much needed labor to Hong Kong residents, which is very economically positive. My research shows that some Hong Kong Disney workers have different worker experiences based upon their positions, class, and ethnic background. I do not want to reduce actual economic inequality and issues of fairness to the realm of "feelings." Instead the stakes are much higher in Hong Kong Disneyland and mainland Chinese factories. My intervention is to show a revealing snapshot in Disney labor practices in Hong Kong.

Before the park opened there were labor violations claims and there are a constant stream of Mainland Chinese Disney factory labor injustice claims. My data and interviews illustrated that some of the Hong Kong Disneyland workers were treated

unequally because of their nationality and ethnicity. The Hong Kong Disneyland engineer felt the Americans engineers felt superior. This is contrasted with the middle manager who expressed that he was treated well but he knew there were happy and unhappy employee situations. All the different types of Hong Kong Disneyland workers that I interviewed did not revere the Disney brand and thought of the company as just a job. The ones that I spoke with also indicated that they were forced to dance more shows than dancers of other nationalities. Hong Kong Disneyland workers also show resistance by not employing emotional labor, quitting, and not financially supporting the theme park. The labor unions and allies show direct actions such as protests to support Disney workers. I argued that true Hong Kong labor indigenization is complicated by the fact of the international, intra-national, and transnational HKDL workforce. In the future, based on the information that I have collected, I foresee that more inexpensive Mainland Chinese workers will work at HKDL displacing even more local Hong Kong workers.

Indigenized Competition

Hong Kong Disneyland Vs. Ocean Park

CHAPTER SIX

Smith: “[Hong Kong Disney’s] Problem two is there is another themepark in Hong Kong- Ocean Park.

JB: hmm?

Smith: They have a great PR guy and they have really sold it up. They do all these promotions all the time. They created this image thing that it is the really cool thing to go. And also kind of like- it is this anti-Disney thing—home grown- we are not establishment—kind of- you know. So everyone in HK thinks Ocean Park is the best thing in the world. And they promote it—the locals and if you have the locals on your side you have half the battle—you know- they think- the people I worked with are like, “You have to go to Ocean Park!” (CA Disney Tourism Theorist Interview 1-25-07)

Today is my big interview with high management of Ocean Park, Grant Stone and I am anxious. I walk out of my 1950’s *Tin Hau* (天后) apartment and quickly walk down the dilapidated three flights of stone stairs and I am immediately confronted with smoke and then I see fire. The Chinese believe that smoke is a liminal between-between place where the dead and living can communicate. My 80 year old elderly doorman with his hunched over, but still strong body, crackling face and suspicious eyes is burning paper in a considerably sized steel container on the steps *inside* the building. He is throwing red

and white paper into the fire barrel making the reddish orange and yellow flames dance before my eyes. The smoldering sparks fall all over me like inverted fireworks or a confetti of embers.

It must be some ancestor *feng shui* (fung sui in Cantonese) (風水) thing, I think to myself as I nonchalantly walk through a grey blanket of smoke that smells of warm sandalwood. The smell is still in my lungs when I hop into the ubiquitous red and white taxi below taking me past impressive metal multi-million dollar skyscrapers such as the Norman Foster HSBC building and IM Pei China Bank Tower which locals say is bad luck and cuts away at the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region), China. This is the Hong Kong that I know, where outside of every multimillion dollar 42 story building you see, off to the side, there is a miniscule one foot red Chinese altar asking for godly protection. The local and global do battle in Hong Kong or *Hueng Gong* (香港) daily thus one should not be surprised so do its theme parks: local Ocean Park and transnational Hong Kong Disneyland.

In the taxi I remember why I am here. Half whispers from locals and global newspaper lines flood my *mind*...

Ocean Park trumps Disneyland (South China Morning Post, Jan 25, 2011)

Hong Kong theme park outsmarts the mouse (Pierson 2007)

Mickey Mouse might have met his match --the giant panda (Pierson 2007)

I will meet and interview the local *David* who is high management of Ocean Park. I will interview Grant Stone to find out his perspective as a theme park executive, who has worked globally in the United States, Spain and now Hong Kong. Presently in Hong Kong there is a two theme park match-up: the transnational corporation Disneyland and the local Hong Kong theme park, Ocean Marine Park. For many in the world it would seem like an easy knockout punch for *the* global multimedia Fortune 500 entertainment giant like Disney to be the more successful Park in Hong Kong. One could argue that Disney *a la* Mickey Mouse represents a beloved caricature of Americana to the world over. On the other hand Ocean Park, that opened in 1977 is a purely local Hong Kong place that has served and adapted to the local “tiger” city-state for over 30 years. Both are theme parks, but Ocean Park is a Marine- based park while Disney is known the world over for its fantasy themes and transformations of space.

Disney will invest 2.45 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$314 million) for a 43 percent stake, while the Hong Kong government is paying \$HK22.45 billion (\$2.88 billion). "This wasn't a fair exchange. We have signed an unfair treaty," Cheung Man-kwong, a lawmaker from the opposition Democratic Party, told a special legislative briefing. (November 3, 1999 The Independent)

On the other hand, Ocean Park Marine theme park has been reporting record attendance between 2003 and 2008. (Ocean Park Press Kit 2008) Some other surprising local theme parks have fared well against Disney theme parks around the world. One such example is the Park Asterix in France, who competed better than many French thought against Paris nee Euro Disneyland. This local French theme park was also forced

to get a facelift and the local French are still flocking there in droves. The French say that the local park is more authentically French. This park goes so far that Park Asterix is totally French and appeals to their cultural wants and norms such as the ability to serve wine. This story is similar to the Ocean Park story.

Disneyland History & Theory

Since the first Disneyland theme park was opened in 1955 there has been a plethora of Disney scholars who have examined Disneyland in its many complexities (Koenig 2002, Raz, 1999, Lainsbury, 2000, Scheweizer and Scheweizer 1998, Ross, 2000 et al). As I stated in Chapter 1, Walt Disney was in search of a family friendly place that he could take his two young daughters to. He disdained what he viewed as the unsavory elements of local carnivals and theme parks and the people that those spots attracted. Over the last 60 years since its local opening in Anaheim, California, the original theme park has morphed into one of the largest transnational media and family entertainment corporations in the world. In addition to its theme parks worldwide, Disney has partial or majority ownership of 17 television networks, 6 movie studios, 50 radio stations, 4 television networks, and 6 magazines (Steger, 2003). Hong Kong Disneyland joins 10 other Disney theme parks encompassing 5 resorts located in Anaheim, Paris, Florida, and Tokyo and Hawaii.

Disneyland Mission Statement:

The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information. Using our portfolio of brands to differentiate our content, services and consumer products, we seek to develop the most creative, innovative and profitable entertainment experiences and

related products in the world. Source:
http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/complete_history.htm

Disney Transnational Corporation is now a Fortune 500 Company which means that it is one of the top 500 transnational corporations in the world based on annual revenue. (Sklair 2004) Leslie Sklair mentions in his writing that this corporation often declines to be interviewed and is not transparent. In the Horowitz (1990) survey Disney is ranked #5 in the world in top global brands, behind Kodak (4#), Mercedes Benz (3#), Sony (2#), and Coco Cola (1#). Along with Mc Donald's, the largest restaurant chain in the world, some theorists argue that Disney is part of a global *Americanization* project. Americanization defined by Featherstone is an homogenizing mass media project that revolves around consumption of American products.

Furthermore, Disney is one of the most theorized entities around the world. For Chilean Marxists such as Ariel Dorfman & Armand Mattelart in *How to Read Donald Duck* (1984), they recount how Disney put out over 100 Anti-Communist Comics starring Donald Duck in Latin America. (Dorfman & Mattelart 1984). The authors also argue that Disney is culturally imperialistic because it has close ties to the U.S. Government and specifically promoted anti-Communist regimes. Culture Industry theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer argue that Minnie is part of the fetish commodities that pushes one to consume, which further supports Capitalism. Minnie and Mickey Mouse are part of apparatus's that incorporate and intertwine consumerism and play. Postmodern theorists such as Eco & Baudrillard (1995) argue, "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of

Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation...” (177). In terms of films, Hoerrne argues that Disney films depict women as weak objects and Schickel argues that there are a lot of racial stereotypes. One example would be the Disney Film, (1946) *Song of the South*, which the NCAA National Association of the Advancement of Colored People argued glorified slavery. Janet Wasko argues that Disney history“...celebrates a reification of existing social relations.” (175) Disney then is a Western global corporation that has developed this idealized and imaginary notion of “small town” America, and its values, and it is selling this set of values, intact to other people in other parts of the globe, as their ideal world as well. Some even argue that Disney is the epitome of the capitalist west in disguise. I would like to explore a different kind of theme park in Hong Kong for the purposes of comparison and contrast. Juxtaposed next to Disneyland in Hong Kong is a different local theme park that embodies everything that Disney is not.

Hong Kong Disneyland and Ocean Park Comparison

	Hong Kong Disneyland	Ocean Park
Park opened	September 12, 2005	January 10, 1977
Admission	Adult: \$38-\$45	Adult:\$24
(USD)	Child: \$27-\$32	Child: \$12
Mascot	Mickey Mouse	Whiskers the Sea Lion
2005	5.2 million Attendance	4 million Attendance
2010	5.2 million Attendance	5.4 million Attendance

Normal hours	10a.m.-8p.m.	9:30a.m.-6:30p.m.
Area (acres)	310	215
Attractions	Main Street, USA Adventureland Fantasyland, Tomorrowland Toy Story Land	Adventure Land, Marine Land, Headland Rides Bird Paradise (Future trains, Hotels, attractions)
Reviews	Pros: small kid friendly MTR train accessible, Fine hotels & restaurants Cons: Small, expensive, local protest, Labor issues, few thrill rides Cons Expensive, long queues	Pros: educational Marine animals, birds Entertainment, lots of thrill rides shorter lines, beautiful scenery of Ocean via Cable Car Cons: Older facility Cons: closes early, Construction, no MTR or Hotels, bathrooms-not as clean

Sources: Hong Kong Disneyland, Ocean Park, About.com, Disneyland Report, Forbes, <http://asiancorrespondent.com/48033/5-years-later-ocean-park-still-tops-hk-disneyland-in-numbers-game/>

OCEAN PARK: A 30+ year Old Home Grown “local” Theme Park

JB: What do you think of HKDL and OP Marketing?

Li: If you go to UCLA bookstore and LA Disneyland, there is a lot to buy that you like and here in HK Disneyland there

is not something you can find [to] like, not that much variety. The marketing was targeting Mainland Chinese.

JB: Is OP marketing the same?

Li: Definitely Ocean Park – Alan Zemen- chairman of Ocean Park, did a great promotion job.

Ocean Park is an old theme park—Alan Zemen did the Halloween night and it was very successful. They took initiative to add weddings and it was good for elderly. They can come for a discounted price. There are a lot of plants and it is very educational. (Interview: Jan 10, 2010)

If Disney is the *Goliath*, then Ocean Park is the *David* in this comparative scenario. Ocean Park (OP) started in January 1977 as a local marine theme park in the “tiger” city state of Hong Kong. In comparison to Disney, Ocean Park seems almost like a *tabula rasa* but that is false because this theme park has a long history in Hong Kong. According the Ocean Park Press Kit (2010), it “was opened in January 1977 by the then Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Murray MacLehose. The Hong Kong Jockey Club funded the construction cost of HK \$150 million and the Hong Kong Government provided the land for free.” It is located in south side of Hong Kong Island and has the visually stunning South China Sea as its backdrop. From the early to mid 1980’s OP further developed two more areas, which included “facilities at Tai Shue Wan and thrill rides at the Summit.” (Ocean Park Press Kit 2010:1).

Ocean Park Mission Statement: Ocean Park provides all guests with memorable experiences that combine entertainment and education, while inspiring life long learning and conservation advocacy. Our aim is to maintain a healthy financial status, while

striving to deliver the highest standards of safety, animal care, products and guest service. Source: Ocean Park Press Kit 2010

It should be noted that Ocean Marine Park is a non-profit entity that offers a three-pronged approach of entertainment, education, and conservation according to their media press kit. Forbes.com announced on June 1, 2005 that Ocean Park ranked 7th among the top ten popular amusement parks in the world. “The Park recorded just over four millions visitors in 2005. It is one of the world’s biggest marine and educational themed parks.”(Ocean Park Press Kit 2008). The park is divided into six parts: Lowland Gardens, Kids' World, Marine Land (**海洋天地**), Headland Rides, Adventure Land (**急流天地**) and Bird Paradise. A giant completely clear bubble shaped cable car ride makes you feel like you are floating in the air when it transports you from the lowland area to the headland. In the seemingly glass bubble you are looking down and around you see the stunning South China Sea (**南中國海**).

There are three popular theaters that have daily shows. They are named Ocean Theater, Whiskers Theater and the Birds Theater. The shows are both entertaining, nature based and educational. In the Lowland Gardens area you can see the two Giant Pandas: An An (**安安**) and Jia Jia (**佳佳**) given to the park by the People Republic of China. Later, two more pandas were given named Le Le (**樂樂**) and Ying Ying (**盈盈**) to commemorate the 10th anniversary that Hong Kong SAR has gone back to Mainland China governance.

"China would never give pandas to Disney," said Lee Wing-tat, a Hong Kong legislator. "Beijing wants to show it cares about Hong Kong people. So they gave them to Ocean Park." (Pierson, Los Angeles Times, June 30, 2007)

The Kids World section is focused on teaching children about marine animals at the Dolphin University. In Marine World Land the jelly fish in the dark underground viewing area are mesmerizing. The shark aquarium is in an under ground tunnel where you can see 70 sharks of different species. In Headland Rides and Adventure Land is where you will hear screams from roller coaster riders. Below is another table that shows each of the two theme park's attributes.

Ocean Park and Disneyland Theme Park Attributes

THEME PARKS	OWNERS	CHARACTERS	SIZE	VISTORS	PROBLEMS
Ocean park	100% Locally gov't. owned	Whiskers the Sea Lion, Owl (Professor)- Educational [nature]	Large	*Locals & *Mainland Chinese Tourists	Older establishment in contrast to newer themeparks
Hong Kong Disneyland	HK gov't owned 53%, 47% owned by Disney Inc	Americans such as Mickey Mouse, Minnie [fantasy]	Locals complain it is too small	*Mainland Chinese Tourists	riots, protests, boycotts, criticisms by locals

Interviews With Ocean Park High Management: Grant Stone

Now that I have laid out the differences between the history, mission and vision of each of the theme parks, I want to share information gleaned from interviews with a high level executive of Ocean Park, Grant Stone. Alan Zeman, Ocean Park chairman and Board member is also crucial to the success of this local theme park. They are both interesting figures in that they are multinational executives themselves having worked in theme parks in different parts of the globe. Stone has spent his whole life in the theme park industry, and strives to make Ocean Park an international destination, but one that is true to the values of the Hong Kong history and sensibilities:

Stone: My whole life has been spent in the theme park industry. I started as a teenager at Knott's Berry Farm...worked for 21 years.

JB: hmmm?

Stone: I left Knott's and joined Six Flags in the midst of great growth and management changes. I was positioned at the Vallejo property called Marine World Africa USA, which is located at the southern tip of Napa Valley and the Northern tip of SF Bay. Basically it was a Zoo they were converting to an animal based theme park- branding it Six Flags; Incorporating rides and attractions. I did that for 2 years and was given the opportunity to move to Madrid, Spain to represent Six Flags, who had the licensing rights to Warner Bros. and to oversee the design, development and operation of a brand new park being established. (OP High Management Interview: April 14, 2010)

The taxi takes me past the Central (中環) and eventually to the Admiralty (金鐘) Hong Kong bus stop which shows the majesty of this extraordinary global financial hub that the British once erroneously called a barren rock. My soul is ringing from the frenetic energy of Hong Kong. I immediately feel the dank wall of humidity hit me and then the Hong Kong symphony starts. I see masked crowds howling and hear plates shouting at hungry Café de Coral (大家樂) *dà jiā lè* lunch patrons as I walk into the Admiralty double deckerbus 629 that will take me to the Ocean Park (香港海洋公園) Marine Theme Park.

I climb to the top level of the double-decker which is like a fire-reddened metallic dragon. On the bus, I am listening to these foiled forked tongues tickle me. After 25 minutes I start to smell the salty air. While disembarking, I see the Ocean Park mascot waving me in. Grant Stone, distinguished veteran theme park executive of such places as Knott's Berry Farm, Six Flags's, and Warner Bros meets me at his office. He is tall and well groomed with the air of self-confidence exuding Southern California charm. Alan Zeman, Chairman of Ocean Park Board of Directors, recruited Stone in 2004 to be the Chief Executive Officer to take over for outgoing CEO Randolph Guthrie. (*Catching the Wave* 2008). Forbes Magazine calls Alan Zeman the "Mouse Killer" because he outdid Hong Kong Disneyland.^{xii} (Kwok 2007)

Stone was selected because of his vast and unique experience in both the theme park and wild life industries. Before this new executive came to Hong Kong, Ocean Park was in dire straits with falling attendance due to the handover in 1997 from Britain back

to Mainland China; international tourism trends; and the SARS and Bird Flu scare. There were even dismal predictions that the park would close down. Through Stone and Zeman's leadership, Ocean Park has made seven years of record-breaking attendance profits, while Disney has not made a profit or predicted attendance since it has opened. (*Catching the Wave* 2008)

Stone is an Anglo-American of German, Dutch and English extraction and has the easygoing style of a native of the city of Orange, California. His extensive theme park experience first began at Knott's Berry Farm where he started as teenage part-time worker. After 21 years in the theme park business, he rose up the ranks to become vice president of Park Operations and Entertainment at Knott's Berry Farm. While there, he helped develop the center court (Knott's Camp Snoopy) of the *Mall of America* in Minneapolis. He was assigned there to assist with design, development and operation. In 1998, he joined Six Flags Marine World in California and later accepted an appointment as vice president and general manager of Warner Brothers Movie World in Madrid in 2000 (*Catching the Wave*, 2008).

Stone says he was positioned at the Vallejo property called Marine World Africa USA, which is located at the southern tip of Napa Valley and the Northern tip of San Francisco Bay. "Basically it was a Zoo they were converting to an animal based theme park- branding it Six Flags. Incorporating rides and attractions. I did that for 2 years and was given the opportunity to move to Madrid Spain to represent Six Flags, who had the

licensing rights to Warner Bros and to oversee the design, development and operation of a brand new park being established.”

Later Six Flags was developing a Warner Bros *Movie World* in Madrid, Spain. Stone was tapped to complete the design and oversee this development. After four years there, two opportunities were presented to him. One was to return to the States and take on a new Six Flags park and the other one was in Asia. He chose to depart Six Flags to take his career in a new direction. Enter Ocean Park. Unlike the other theme parks where he worked, Ocean Park is a fully 100% government owned, not-for-profit marine educational center and theme park. Tung Chee Hwa, first Chief Executive and President of Hong Kong executive council tapped the chairman of the Ocean Park Board to be Alan Zeman. Zeman, a Canadian national who later gained Chinese citizenship, hired Grant Stone. Alan Zeman (蘭桂坊之父) is most notable for being the creator of Lan Kwai Fong, a restaurant, shop, bar, café and nightlife area that is popular with both locals and expatriates alike. He is a force in Ocean Park in his own right. *Forbes* magazine has dubbed him the “Mouse Killer” because he has made Ocean Park very successful while HK Disney flounders. "Ocean Park just needed a little TLC," said Alan Zeman, who has become a folk hero of sorts in the local media for dressing in costumes — one was a jellyfish outfit — for news conferences.” (Pierson 2007) Disney and Ocean Park are totally different. Disney is about castles, fantasy, and they have a mouse as their iconic mascot. Ocean Park is really about nature, ecology, sea mammals and education. One is an American import. One is local. (Pierson, Los Angeles Times, June 30, 2007)

The Ocean Park Board and Alan Zeman appreciated the experience that Stone had from his extensive experiences from California, to Minnesota to Spain and how he was involved in the Master planning of new parks, the developing of new parks, and the growing of a new park. Stone also did these operations in a Disney competitive environment and thus was eventually offered the job which he accepted in January 2004. Stone says that since that time they have defined the master plan, they have developed the park from an antiquated facility to a more modern facility, with a master plan defined and being rolled out over a 6-year and 8 phase process, including an investment level of US\$750 million for the renovation of the facility. The goal he says “ is to keep the best and improve the rest.” Likewise, they have set an objective to complete the redevelopment while the Park is operating to ensure that Ocean Park is a thriving business at all times that remains relevant.

I asked him about the differences between a non-profit marine world theme park (like Ocean Park) and a for-profit one (like Hong Kong Disney). He told me that there are some differences in the business structure between a for-profit theme park and a non-profit theme park. The differences are in how the process of making decisions works, how the corporate governance is structured, and the degree of transparency requirements. “While the work and the delivery of theme park business/experiences for guests is similar at all parks, including Sea World, Disney, Universal, Cedar Fair, etc., since Ocean Park is

a government owned entity, it must be transparent as all times.” (Stone Interview April 14, 2010). This is all spelled out in the Ocean Park Corporation Ordinance below.

OCEAN PARK CORPORATION ORDINANCE - SECT 17 Functions of the Corporation

The functions of the Corporation shall be-

- (a) to manage and control Ocean Park as a public recreational and educational park;
- (b) to provide at Ocean Park recreational and educational facilities and other related facilities as it thinks fit;
- (c) to develop Ocean Park for the purposes of recreation or education generally in such manner as it thinks fit; and
- (d) to apply its profits howsoever derived towards the promotion of its functions specified in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c). (Enacted 1987)

Source: <http://www.hklii.org/hk/legis/en/ord/388/s17.html>

The base operations of non-profit and for-profit theme parks are the same in that both parks need to have visitors stay longer to make more revenue. The ownership is different in that the government owns Ocean Park wholly. The marine facility is also a different product that only a few theme parks have. Ocean Park has a Board of Directors and Ocean Park Ordinance delegates specific defined authority and obligations. Because it is government owned, all operations, expenses must be made public. This is not a model that Disney uses, as it is often accused of not being transparent in their financial dealings especially in the Hong Kong Disneyland case. (Ewing 2006) There are also Ocean Park Board members who are all volunteers, appointed by the government and

have no financial conflicts of interest. The Board's role is to make the park successful for everyone. " (Ocean Park Press Kit.)

OCEAN PARK CORPORATION ORDINANCE - SECT 8
Membership of the Board (Past version on 30/06/1997). Adaptation amendments retroactively made - see 59 of 2000 s. 3

- (1) The Board shall consist of not less than 7 members appointed by the Chief Executive.
- (2) Without prejudice to section 42 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap 1), a member shall hold office for a period of not more than 3 years as the Chief Executive may determine, but may from time to time be re-appointed.
- (3) Any member may at any time by notice in writing to the Chief Executive resign from the Board. (Enacted 1987. Amended 59 of 2000. Source: <http://www.hkllii.org/hk/legis/en/ord/388/s8.html>)

American Versus Eastern Theme Park Experience Differences

I went to Asia for the first time when I was an undergraduate right before I was going off to UCLA. My mom and dad demanded that we go on this 10-day family trip. We grew up working class and never had a family vacation before. My father insisted that we go so he could show us the *real* Hong Kong and Japan. My parents were still young then even though I did not realize it at the time, but this would be the first and last time we would be all together again as a family on vacation. I was raised in Belleview, Illinois and in my teens we relocated and settled in Diamond Bar, California. To say the least, Asia back then was just an exotic blob in my mind that I could not begin grasp other than as the exoticized National Geographic or UNICEF programs I saw on television or read about in magazines. At age 18 my sister and I were petulant about Hong Kong distinct ways such as the hot humid weather and lack of toilet facilities. At

that time I remember that Ocean Park was the only theme park in Hong Kong. Today's Hong Kong tourists and the locals of Hong Kong have two options: Ocean Park and Hong Kong Disney.

I asked Stone in our interview, "What are the differences between Ocean Park and Disney?" He said, "Fundamentally what you are looking at – saying juxtaposing Disney and Ocean Park. What I often say to people if you are looking for an American theme park experience- I would suggest you go to Disney. If you come to Hong Kong and want a Hong Kong theme park experience, we offer it 100%. What makes us a Hong Kong theme park for example is our location, and our topography, we are on a challenging hilltop. There are a lot of elevation changes in the Park and beautiful views of nature and of the ocean and everything around us. " Hong Kong Disneyland is built in Penny Bay which was a man-made reclaimed landfill which was controversial because of the environmental concerns. There were claims that the project will kill a lot of fish in the area.

Ocean Park: More Local Hong Kong Experiences and Heritage

Personally I think that Ocean Park is better than Hong Kong Disneyland because of my age. Disney is for 2-5 years old but I am 8 and I need more excitement! " (HK School girl, age 8 2010)

My small sons prefer Disney. Ocean Park is better. Ocean Park has educational value, Disneyland is a Fantasy. I don't want my kids to dream. Ocean Park has ocean animals to know about. Not just play, there is an appreciation of nature. (Hong Kong Parent Interview 2010).

One might argue that there are a few things Western about Ocean Marine Park such as rides that are universal and were designed in the West. Ocean Park complements that thrill seeking fun element with a knowledge base at composed of three pillars: Education, Conservation and Entertainment. "We have never lost focus, they have guided us. We market ourselves as a Hong Kong people's park; we are for the HK people. Ocean Park has generation value. This means that the Hong Kong people have grown up with OP and are now coming back with their kids and grandkids." (Stone 2008)

There are also familial linkages and those are the iconic attractions, such as the cable car, the South China Sea, and animals attractions. Ocean Park represents heritage and continuity for local Hong Kong families ironically since many disparage that Hong Kong has no real indigenous culture. Disneyland does not have this generational value in Asia outside of Tokyo Disney. California and Florida Disney theme parks, on the other hand, do have generational value for Americans but not Hong Kong residents. According to a Hong Kong resident, "I'd always come here with my friends, at least once a year since I was a young teenager," said Alan Koh, 28, enjoying a hamburger near the hot air balloon ride one weekend. "My parents would also take me. We'd take the cable car, see the fish and eat fast food. Every kid experiences Ocean Park." (Pierson 2007)

Ocean Park also offers some Western foods such as Mc Donald's hamburgers and fries. Ocean Park now uses a third party food approach except for McDonalds establishment. Stone, High Management of Ocean Marine Park says they made a conscious effort to make the food offering more local and more Chinese than it used to be in the past times.

It used to be too western, in my opinion; we have to be culturally relevant. We did some very specific food adjustments that are relevant. We did specific food programs and developments to focus on local flavor and local values. We put in Cha Chan Tang restaurant, which is basically a very traditional Chinese street cafeteria- mass variety, low pricing and high quality food. Our Panda café- it specifically focused on Asian food- Sichuan and Hong Kong specialty—again we did not have this before. We have a Chinese sit down restaurant that specializes in Cantonese food. The goal was to get back to make us unique and to be culturally relevant and have differential values. (Merhmann interview: April 14, 2010).

Ocean Park: Local Halloween ghosts & local media

JB: What do you think about Ocean Park?

Chang: The Ocean Park Haunted Night—It is really scary! It is not intended for kids. It is really scary—the area is quite big—it is always sold out—and it has been going on for ten years.

JB: Do Hong Kongers like it?

Chang: It is targeted toward HK people- the taste and style. It is not an American Halloween. Ocean Park has Asian ghosts.

JB: Disney Cartoons Vs. Japanese Cartoons?

Chang: HK people are very interested to Japanese trends, even more than US. (Interview Local HK resident Interview: 2009)

My teenage daughter has always liked Ocean Park because for the rides and Halloween. (Local Parent interview: 2010).

One of the famous holidays that Ocean Park is known for it is its Halloween (based on Western tradition) Bash. The whole park is converted to the largest Halloween party in the world. Sunny SK Lam (2010) *Global corporate cultural capital' as a drag on glocalization: Disneyland's promotion of the Halloween Festival* states that Disney's corporate culture negates true local Hong Kong indigenization. Lam argues that HKDL tried to accommodate to the local community by putting on scarier and scarier Halloween television ads that violated Disney core values of "family friendly fun." The ads did not have the usual Disney character roundup of Goofy, Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Daisy. "The universality and homogeneity of Disneyland's inherited 'global corporate cultural capital' and multinational corporate culture undermines its flexibility in a postmodern consumer market that favors cultural hybridities and diversities" (Lam, pg 632).

And we made it completely local, we tell local ghost stories. We used to have Frankenstein, Dracula- western icons. We got rid of all of them and focused on local ghosts stories and made them very relevant to our local market, which has added to the interest and success of the event. (OP Management interview: April 14, 2010).

Ocean Park interviewed locals around town about superstitions and found such ghosts as the ghost catcher and the one braided girl. This female ghost is terrifying as she has a braid across her face. There are many different types of ghosts at the OP Halloween bash. These ghost come from many origins. Indeed cultural hybridities play an important role in the success of Ocean Park's Halloween Bash in terms of the fluidity and dynamic nature of 'glocalization' working for integrative crossover of different global, as well as

local, ideas, identities, and cultures. (Lam, 2010: 632) The Hong Kong market is difficult because HK people are well traveled and educated. Consequently OP cannot run the same haunted attraction two years in a row.

We discovered that – in the States- I can run a haunted attraction for three years in a row, without changes, and not have problem- same gag, same ghosts and it still does well. Here I can't do a house for a second year. We do 8 houses and 8 stage shows and 400 monsters- every year we have a different theme- a different approach- every show is different, every production is different, every year. (Stone interview: April 14, 2010).

Disneyland has never done a scary Halloween as that would go against Walt Disney's mandates for the company. Very recently they did run a scary Halloween commercial in Hong Kong and everyone thought it was an advertisement for Ocean Park. Some argue that the Disney alien house, which was used as a scary attraction, was not culturally relevant or scary. But people who go to Ocean Park tell a different story.

I was so terrified at the Ocean Park Halloween! I ran and screamed with my friends. (High School Student Interview: Nov 18, 2009)

Ocean Park is very terrifying! Ocean Park is more spacious and plenty of shops and that have been empty for a long time and they refurbish and make into scary house. Those actors in Ocean Park enjoy scaring people and won't touch you.

Such games are originally from Japan- they open with local theme park (local educator interview: Aug 10, 2009)

Ocean Park aggressively uses Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in its social marketing campaign. There have been several viral videos of OP visitors on the thrill rides screaming. Ocean Park also offers discounts if you bring a picture of yourself from an earlier visit to Ocean Park. They have also commercials that would not be approved by the censors and have gotten viral responses on YouTube.com. They also have a intense pedagogical and environmental aim and donate \$1.00 of each paid admission to conservation educations and organization.

Conclusion: Ocean Park forever linked to Disney & Hong Kong City State

Hong Kong Disneyland claimed to be culturally relevant when they arrived in 2005. However, in reality they conducted focus groups that only superficially got at the core local markets needs. What they failed to glean were a few important issues. As my interviewers and Disney's own focus groups found that some Hong Kong residents do not fully trust their government. There are also prominent post 1980s Democracy activists that often get media attention. These activists are named as such because these are protesters who were born post 1980's. The second important issue is that Hong Kong is a food Mecca. It is not uncommon in Hong Kong to have a family of eight live in 400 sq feet apartment which forces many people to eat out every meal. The local food, including street food [discussed in the consumption and marketing chapter] is cheap, delicious, and fast. Disney food miscues came in the form of very expensive BBQ rice and Hainan Chicken rice, which did not taste good. Their chefs and management were predominantly western [READ: American] and did not understand

the subtleties of Hong Kong dining culture, which tends to be more urbane than U.S. theme park food. The Western management policies and practices from the United States dominated and overrode the local Asian staff at Hong Kong Disneyland. This mitigated any real influence that Disney staff could have had on Western managers to promote true cultural awareness.

Third, there was also the public relations nightmare of the opening of the park and the complaints from various organizations. One such organization is SACOM (Students and Scholars Against Corporate Mismanagement) who charge that Disney products sold in the park are made in sweatshops in China. Disneyland intellectual property issues must always be approved in Burbank, CA and because of this local Hong Kong Disney media is stymied. But even more damaging, is the appearance that silence means that Disney is guilty. Response to PR crises often took too long because they had to have final approval from the central Disney office in Burbank, California. Thus journalists could not get ready answers quickly, which caused a lag in timely information and rising suspicion of answers when they were finally given.

Fourth, The high price of attendance is also a factor; especially for a mere 13 rides, which was the number from 2005-2010. The Hong Kong population is very focused on getting the best price point for their products. It is not lost on locals that you get double the rides at Ocean Park for half the price of Hong Kong Disneyland. There are not enough Disney attractions to keep patrons there for the full day. What continually haunts HKDL is the sense from the Hong Kong locals that they have not

been given a fair deal. The constantly cited issues of revenue loss, unresolved labor abuse claims, and endemic local insensitivity does not help the image of Disney nor the perception of the quality of the experience of locals who do attend.

Ocean Park has fully taken advantage of Disney's real and perceived shortcomings, and uses their local expertise to the fullest. For example, they ran a series of promotions such as bring a photo and get 20% off and that everyone gets into OP free for their birthday kinds of promotions. HKDL has also copied OP in many arenas in trying to be more culturally sensitive. They now engage in quick and immediate marketing as well as using more flexible media strategies. The two experts at the Ocean Marine Park helm are Thomas Merhmann and Alan Zeman. They are lauded as exemplar global executives who are sensitive to both local and international clientele needs. Ocean Park's responses tend to be instant, and that local theme park has not cost the Hong Kong government revenue loss. They are thought to be price conscious even as they move to open a hotel and to eventually have trains connected to the site.

What they are notable for, that very few other theme parks in the world have, is their wildlife zoo which includes such beloved animals as panda bears, exotic birds, and jelly fish to name a few. It is significant to note they started with 35 attractions and will be doubling their local staff head count from 1500 to 3000. Ocean Park is also introducing a brand new Front Gate and the entry and exit will be revamped. The iconic elements such as the cable car, the ocean views, and the Ocean Theater will remain.

The Ocean Park debt, unlike the Hong Kong Disney debt, will have to be fully paid back to the Hong Kong government. In Ocean Park's case every bit of the redevelopment has to be repaid, there are no subsidies and no grants. Ocean Park is a not-for-profit theme park and will pay their debt and not burden the taxpayers. Ultimately, Ocean Park is a huge advocate of Disney and wants them to succeed. John Ap's study on HK residents' opinions on HK Disneyland found that residents thought that "HK Disneyland would complement rather than compete with Ocean Park". He also found that 80% of residents believed that the opportunities for fun at both parks are comparable and not competitive. (Media Release 4/4/2006) Who knows, one day there might be some cross promotions between the parks? Ocean Park respects the local Hong Kong populace by indigenizing fully to the Hong Kong culture in terms of Halloween, labor, food, price points, and buildings. The creation of Hong Kong Disneyland is what spurred the older theme park to innovate, redesign, and build. OP wants and needs Disney to be successful and maybe in the future there might be tourist cross endorsements such as the issuance of two park tickets. Hong Kong will need at least a generation to grow up with Disneyland; Ocean Park has a 30-year head start. Ocean Park is inexorably linked to Hong Kong Disneyland and to the city state of Hong Kong. Only by Disney succeeding and drawing in weeklong tourists and visitors can Ocean Park succeed at its highest levels. Hong Kong must also be a destination of choice for international visitors as well as local Mainland Chinese. The opening of Shanghai Disneyland will also be a new test and the future is open as to whether both Disney and Ocean Park can continue to capture the local and international visitor. Ocean Park has a longer and more successful history.

Conclusion

State and Popular Culture Projects

Why did Antonio Gramsci place questions of popular culture at the center of a state's focus of development? Anthropologists and cultural studies theorists have long argued the importance of looking at globalization through state-popular culture interactions (Appadurai 1996, Barber 1996, Ritzer 1993, Hall 360, Mbembe 1992). In this dissertation I have tried to show how a state and popular culture project tries to indigenize (labor, consumption, and space) a particular pattern of relations between the local and transnational spheres. I argue that the results of these indigenization processes have been uneven for both parties in unanticipated ways. Hong Kong Disneyland's American-led corporate culture, responsive local competition, low-cost consumption alternative, and a transnational workforce complicate matters of true indigenization.

Global Culture: Same or Different?

Manfred Steger (2003) asks "does global culture make us more same or different?"(70). Some global theorists believe we are evolving into a McDonaldized common global culture. Analyses of the global impact of McDonald's are revelatory to my study of Hong Kong Disneyland because it represents a particular American brand.

In *The McDonaldization of Society*, American sociologist, George Ritzer (2000) argues that fast food restaurants are homogenizing America and the world. He argues these cultures tend to be Western and specifically American. Ritzer contends that the food is unhealthy, and the forced emotional labor is artificial. Political theorist Benjamin Barber (1996), in *Jihad Vs. McWorld*, argues that there is a war between international consumerism (McWorld) and religious identity (Jihad), which has the potential to undermine democracy. This relates to my study because there is definitely conflict involving the Disney Corporation, Chinese publics, Hong Kong SAR, and Hong Kong residents about the appropriateness of this state project for the people of Hong Kong.

James Watson, in *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (1997), speaks back to the idea that all consumerism is bad. Watson shows how the Hong Kong McDonalds taught Hong Kong people how to queue and improved sanitation standards beyond the restaurants themselves and into Hong Kong local culture proper. Sangmee Bak (1997) shows how some Koreans considered McDonalds an exponent of cultural imperialism through their food. In *The End of History* (1989), Francis Fukuyama sees positives in Americanization and late capitalism in that they will eventually lead to western democracy. Sociologist Roland Robertson argues that global flows often reinvigorate local culture; he has popularized the Japanese business term "glocalization." Glocalization is a Japanese term that denotes when the global flows infuses with the local community to form a synergic and positive entity (Robertson 1995). Sidney Mintz (1997) argues that not all successes and failures are alike. You can see this in the Disney theme park literature. Euro Disney has declared bankruptcy twice amid accusations of

being a “cultural Chernobyl.” (Lainsbury 2000) Raz (1999) contends that Tokyo, Japan Disneyland was an example of successful domestication or Japanization. This relates to Hong Kong Disneyland in that this transnational corporation had different kinds of unexpected successes and failures in their attempt to adapt to the local environment than did other transnational Disneyland parks and resorts..

Theoretical Interventions

There are few anthropologists and globalization theorists who have given enough attention to the pluralist nature of global theme parks; notable exceptions are academics who do not characterize them as uniform expressions of collective consciousness (Anagnost 1997, Handler and Gable 1997, Fjellman 1992, Raz 1999, Lainsbury 2000). These studies often fall into either the globalization or the homogenization camps. Sociologist Raz (1999) argues that Tokyo Disneyland was not culturally or materially imperialized by the West; rather, they have "Japanized" the park to suit the local needs of the Japanese community. Marketer and Disney employee Lainsbury (2000) argues that Paris neé Euro Disney offers diversion and entertainment despite its first year losses. Anagnost (1997) sees the Mainland Chinese theme park as another example of "narrating the nation." She uses *Splendid China*, a mainland theme park that shows that the "desire and ambivalence of a historical past are becoming displaced (and replaced by) commodified forms along with the expansion of a market economy "(14). This is pertinent to Hong Kong Disneyland because local Hong Kong residents are showing ambivalence to the park by not attending in the numbers projected by Disney. In response

to Hong Kong Disneyland, some Hong Kong residents are showing renewed nostalgia for Ocean Park, which is increasing its revenue and the longing that residents have for this local marine theme park.

David Guss argues that, if culture is a contested terrain, then festivals are its battleground (2000). He presents the case of the Afro-Venezuelan celebration of San Juan, the neo Indian Day of the Monkey, and the multinational British tobacco corporation. He presents the mestizo ritual of Tamunangue to show how the locals are using the ritual to resist, collude, and acquiesce. You can see similar attributes with Hong Kong Disneyland in that local Hong Kong residents resist by not attending the park. They also come in conflict with Mainland Chinese when they do attend. Here I use Guss to argue that the glocalization model obscures the real intra- Chinese culture wars that are occurring at Hong Kong Disneyland. This glocalization theory talks about the harmonious marriage of a global flow and a local community. Neither glocalization nor McDonaldization theories can fully address what is happening at Hong Kong Disneyland because there are hidden scripts that are not seen, and must be revealed. For example, if Hong Kong Disneyland is turning an overall profit based upon the attendance of nouveau-riche mainland Chinese and wealthy international tourists, this fact tends to obscure the absence of local residents, who do not attend in numbers that match Disney's initial projections. You cannot see this cultural phenomenon in the profit numbers.

This dissertation looks at how and to what extent that Hong Kong Disneyland indigenizes around the use of space, engages around issues of labor relations, and handles

the integration of the marketing and consumption of their products with local cultural values.. My thesis is that this corporation fails at true indigenization in a number of ways. These can be traced back to the on-going resentment and mistrust by members of the public around the original inequitable terms of state- Disney corporate partnership, which has resulted in the ongoing distrust of the government and Disney that persists to this day; in the highly publicized sweatshop labor claims; and in the intra-national and international culture wars (or ethnic and class disputes) that are occurring among Chinese ethnics in the park and in society. Locals who remain very ambivalent about the park often cite the unfair park economic and political operation deal, labor inequality between Hong Kong and non- Hong Kong workers, perceived poor service, and bad publicity as negatives. On the other hand, the attempts at space indigenization, such as *feng shui* and culturally conscious Hong Kong Disneyland hotels have been quite well received. But the unanticipated ‘culture wars’ between Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong people have also marred the park goers' experience. Ocean Park, the local theme park competitor remains the preferred park for most Hong Kong citizens. The indigenization of labor has been found wanting and non-egalitarian in that some employees in management have more comfortable work lives, while rank and file workers continue to complain of unequal treatment among workers or between workers and management. This is especially seen in how Filipino dancers are treated in comparison to local Hong Kong dancers. Lastly, locals have pretty much rejected Disney’s attempts at the indigenization of food in the park because of perceptions of the poor taste of the food, the high prices of the food, and the long wait times. This popular culture and state project,

Hong Kong Disneyland, becomes a metaphorical battleground for different local and transnational actors. These matters complicate space, labor, and consumption indigenization.

Recounting Chapter Aims & Answers

Chapter Two provided a contextual snapshot of Hong Kong's history of labor, the Disney franchise, and Disney's history in China. Within Hong Kong history, I highlight its labor history, focusing on female garment workers. Hong Kong's ascension can be attributed to cheap female labor that eventually made the island into what Saskia Sassen (2001) has termed a global city. I argue that, in the decision to build Hong Kong Disneyland, an unequal partnership was developed between Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) and Disneyland Corporation. In their agreement very little attention was paid to providing jobs for displaced Hong Kong workers, as had been promised. In my interviews with residents of Hong Kong, they indicated they did not feel the partnership was equal to both sides. Both of these two entities were looking for positive avenues of growth.

In Chapter Three I argued that part of the reason that the park is poorly attended for the first few years is that it suffers from miscues of marketing to the disparate Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong Cantonese communities. For a population that has minimal knowledge of Disney history and culture, there was not sufficient marketing to overcome those barriers. The elderly in both Mainland China and Hong Kong have almost no knowledge of Disney at all. The marketing was not well targeted to local Hong

Kong residents, which served to further alienate them. In my interviews, the Hong Kong locals said they had heard from media reports about the problematic marketing and public relations. Lastly, many middle class Hong Kong people are savvy international travelers, who have visited several Disneyland's and know that their park is relatively small. Local Hong Kong residents also have cultural conflicts or ethnic-class issues with Mainland Chinese tourists that play out at the park daily mostly via verbal fights. This is something that Disney did not anticipate, nor to this date has figured out how to handle.

Chapter Four looked at the indigenization of space at the theme park. Since Hong Kong Disneyland opened in 2005, there has been persistent negative publicity in the media about the perceived cultural insensitivities found in the park. The park has attempted to indigenize or adapt to the local Chinese Cantonese community by using *feng shui*, an ancient architectural method. The park used specific color, placement, and number schemes to achieve this. The thesis is that there was a good attempt by Hong Kong Disneyland to indigenize to local space or *feng shui* customs, *but* the basic hard cultural form of Disney space is unchanged significantly. The Hong Kong Disneyland hotels are exemplary, but the unanticipated culture conflicts continue to mar some visitor experiences.

Chapter Five opens with the Cultural Studies theoretical framework that guides this study. Here I interviewed Hong Kong Disneyland workers and summarized their positions. Depending on their positions and experiences within the corporation the workers and union activists expressed disparate opinions about Hong Kong Disneyland.

Local Hong Kong Disney workers did not take the Disney jobs because of a childhood love of the place, as is the case for some U.S. Disney workers, but rather for monetary advancement. I argue that labor inequality at the park is based on nationality, ethnicity, and the intra-ethnic relations of regional Chinese workers and that these issues complicate true labor indigenization. Filipino dancers are not given the same contracts or work details as other workers. The Cast Member's union does not expressly address their concerns or those of other non- local Hong Kong workers. It is predicted that eventually many Mainland workers will be a growing part of the workforce, which is likely to irk local Hong Kong residents further, as the park was sold to the public as a panacea for its unemployment woes. The park was ostensibly created to provide more jobs for the Hong Kong population, and they have achieved that to a degree, but the majority of elite, high management jobs are still held by Euro Americans, and transnational Filipino workers hold the dancers jobs. There are continuing labor abuses from both the local HKDL and the Disney factories (SACOM 2010).

Chapter Six compares and contrasts Hong Kong Disneyland and Ocean Park. It finds that Ocean Park has been more successful in addressing the needs of local by successfully indigenizing/hybridizing global and local needs after over 30 years of operation in Hong Kong. Ocean Park also a board of directors comprised of local experts and executives who recognize and respect the diverse needs of Hong Kong Cantonese. Ocean Park uses specifically Hong Kong Cantonese indexical dragging that Hong Kong Disneyland cannot fully engage in their marketing because of the presence of hard Disney forms and the lack of generational Disney knowledge by Mainland tourists and

older Hong Kong citizens. Hong Kong Disneyland also struggles with implementing true indigenization processes because of its constantly changing CEOs, lack of primarily non-local decision-making, lack of robust Disney knowledge, non-transparent operating budgets and procedures, perceived hubris, and extensive negative publicity.

Limitations

This study offers a snapshot of local Hong Kong residents and Hong Kong Disneyland worker's perspectives on a state and popular culture project--Hong Kong Disneyland indigenization efforts as seen in labor, consumption, and space. The study encountered a number of limitations, which need to be considered. George Marcus (1998) calls for the importance of multi-sited research, which is something that I would have liked to explore. Specifically I would have liked to look into Disney factories in Mainland China, but that would have required a different IRB (Institutional Review Board) clearance. What I did was focus all my attention and resources on my Hong Kong field-site, and this research was buttressed by researching the original Disney Corporation in Anaheim, California. This might be picked up for later date as there are ripe comparisons between the two parts.

Time constraints also limited the scope of my inquiry, as I was able to spend only 14 months in the field with two original pre-field trips. Ideally, a multi-year, continuous residency would have produced more information. In my case, my research questions were all answered, and new ones were produced during my fieldwork. For my

next project, I would have like to investigate the post-1980s activists in Hong Kong who somehow hovered around the periphery of my area of research.

Recommendations for Further Research

More research is needed on large state and popular culture projects that that affect millions of individuals, communities, labor practices, and the environment. For example, Shanghai Disney, projected to open in 2015 (ShanghaiDisneyResort.com), will severely impact Hong Kong Disney, which currently attracts a third of its guests from the Mainland China. Why would Mainland Chinese continue to visit Hong Kong Disneyland, which is both more expensive and smaller in size? Much additional research remains to be done on the establishment of this new Disneyland site and how it will affect Hong Kong Disneyland. Shanghai Disneyland has already garnered a lot of controversy, much of it due to the forced displacement of people and their land in order to build this park. I would like to interview some of these displaced individuals. I would also like to do some follow-up interviews with Hong Kong Disneyland workers and community workers to see if their sentiments have changed over time. This dissertation was not focused on gender and more research on this area would be illustrative. These additional research lines would enhance or extend my project. Stuart Hall says, "Neither the state nor popular culture exhibits a continuous, uninterrupted identity, throughout the long period of capitalist development,"(2006, 361) Stuart Hall's quote would be accurate in the assessment of Hong Kong Disneyland as it has gone through many evolutions and there will be still more transformations that will need further academic research and attention.

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METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Rank Question Methodology

RANK these Statements from 1 -5 with 5 meaning you strongly agree to 1

you strongly disagree

strongly agree, somewhat agree, no opinion, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree

5 4 3 2 1

Choose 1-5 Answers

1. Ocean Park is my favorite park.
2. I went to Ocean Park when I was a child
3. Ocean Park is a Hong Kong Chinese Park
4. Hong Kong Disneyland is my favorite park
5. I knew about Disneyland when I was a child
6. Hong Kong Disney is a Chinese Park
7. I have traveled to many countries.
8. I have been to many Disneyland's around the world
9. I have been to Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel
10. I have been to Hong Kong Disneyland many times

11. Hong Kong Disneyland suits my cultural needs in terms of food & drinks
12. Hong Kong Disneyland suits my cultural needs in terms of placement of attractions[ie Feng Sui]
13. Hong Kong Disneyland suits my cultural needs in terms of having appropriate labor practices.
14. Ocean Park suits my cultural needs in terms of food & drinks.
15. Ocean Park suits my cultural needs in terms of placement of attractions [Feng Sui]
16. Ocean Park suits my cultural needs in terms of having appropriate labor practices.
17. I wanted Hong Kong Disneyland to be built in Hong Kong.
18. Hong Kong Disneyland was good for Chinese Tourists.
19. Hong Kong Disneyland is good for local Hong Kong local tourists
20. I like American popular culture.
21. Hong Kong people like American popular culture such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Minnie.
22. Hong Kong people like Japanese popular culture such as POKEMON, and animae
23. Hong Kong People like Korean popular Culture such as Wonder Girls and Rain
24. I have been to the American Disneyland.

APPENDIX B: Closed Questions Methodology

24. Hong Kong Disneyland is good for the people of Hong Kong.
25. Hong Kong Disney hires local workers.
26. Hong Kong Disneyland treats its workers well.
27. Hong Kong Disney was built to improve Hong Kong economy during the 1998 financial crisis.
28. Was Tung Chee Hwa was the person who encouraged Disney to build a park in Hong Kong.
29. Did Tung Chee Hwa Tung have the interests of Hong Kong people when he brought Disney to Hong Kong.
30. Shanghai Disney will bring good things to Hong Kong Disneyland.
31. The Hong Kong economy will improve in the next 10 years.
32. The American economy will improve in 10 years.
33. Chinese people have a favorable impression of America.
34. American people have a favorable impression of China.
35. Disneyland is part of American culture.
36. Hong Kong people like more Japanese popular culture than American popular culture.

APPENDIX C: Open Question Methodology

1. What is your passport Nationality?
2. Ethnicity? Identify as?
3. Born?
4. Age you first encountered Disney?
6. What do you think about Hong Kong Disneyland in specifics?
7. Why was Hong Kong Disneyland built in Hong Kong?
8. Do you think Hong Kong Disneyland is successful? Why and why not?
9. What is popular in Hong Kong culture for children?
10. What is popular in Hong Kong culture for adults?
11. What do you think about the possible construction of Shanghai Disneyland?
12. Was HKDL a good construction project for the state of Hong Kong? People?
13. Who goes to Hong Kong Disneyland and why?
14. How is Hong Kong Disney different from other Disneyland's in terms of food, marketing, building placements, and human resources?
15. Any further thoughts about the future of Hong Kong Disneyland?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX D: Oral History & Survey Questions Methodology

I took Dr. Debra Weber two-quarter Oral History class. In that capacity I was able to distribute in Anaheim, California 30 surveys as well as conduct 8 full oral histories of a Disney Theorist, Anaheim community members who are against Disney, Disney union representative, Disney Marketer and Disney workers. This oral histories were scored and transcribed. These interviews were also recorded on Audacity and the CD copy was given back to the interviewers for full approval. This made my research quite different from other local American Disney research or Hong Kong Disney researchers as I had a lot of comparative data before I did the full fieldwork.

I did additional 30 surveys, oral histories and interviews in Hong Kong during my 14-month field work in 2010. The people I interviewed were in some ways parallel to people I interviewed in California. I interviewed a HKDL marketer, HKDL union official, HKDL workers, HKDL workers and HKDL management. I also interviewed local residents of Hong Kong and also Ocean Park. These were recorded with two tape recorders and a Livescribe pen that also recorded the notes. The recording that was saved was through the Audacity recording program. The transcriptions were emailed back to most of the interviewers but some said they did not need it.

Name: [Please Spell out]

Employment

Date:

Year Born:

Time:

Location:

Picture of the location:

Standard Protocol:

Permission: Given by X to cite

IRB explained:

IRB Copy given & signed by the interviewer before we start:

[Note to self: tape is very clear, used mic lapel.]

Equipment: Mic & digital recorder. I also use a second recorder that uses tapes. In Hong Kong I used the Liverscribe pen recorder that not only records all the words but also the text. I generally tell my interviewees that I will return the transcription to them in one day although it is often within two hours. They then read it and correct any part of the transcription that they see fit.

[Tape counter]

[Description: All Oral Histories are transcribed and scored]

TAPE ONE. Side A

Note: tape counter starts at 000 Section 110 How old were you when you first encountered Disney?

130 where is your family from? Name?

[Section 135]

135 Impression of Disney at 7? 10? 13? 16? 20? 25? 30? 40?

[Section 140]

[Section 182] HKDL Executives?

[Section 191] Comparisons with Disney World? Disneyland?

[Section 195] Disney Land Use?

[Section 209]: Hong Kong Government relationship

[Section 235]: Disney Perceptions?

[Section 240:] Perception of locals?

[Section 245}:Disney business model?

[Section 263] In terms of Disney—land use and position

TAPE ONE Side B

[Section: 348] Hong Kong Disney

[Section: 359] HK numbers

[Section: 362] A Corporation-

[Section: 366] The biggest thing they faced is lack of reorganization

[Section 371] Culturally aware and in some ways they were

[Section 375] Idea

[Section 379] When they come to Disney they have CONTEXT

[Section 383] Mainland Chinese stories

[Section 395] Language and cultural reasons

[TAPE 2 of Tape ends___]

[Section 422] Mainland Chinese

[Section: 426] I think that is something that didn't register to them

[Section 432] Disney synergy of having movies different things

[Section: 437] Park

[Section: 442] They have a great PR guy and they have really sold it up

[Section: 445] it is this anti-Disney thing

[Section: 448] Hong Kongers

[Section: 450] Locals

[Section: 455] It is PR and it is the image thing

[SECTION: 555] Suggests new People to interview

[Section: 645] Skeptism of Government

[Section: 665] The HK people

[Note to self:]

End of TAPE TWO Side B

APPENDIX E: Outgoing Oral History Survey

1. Did you expect the questions that you were asked?
2. Do you feel you were treated with respect?
3. How could have the interview process be improved?
4. Was there anything you wanted to add to the oral history but did not express?
5. Would ever do an oral history again?
6. Why and why not?
7. Have you changed any of the opinions you expressed in your oral history?
8. Why or why not?

Thank you for your time. I really appreciate you taking out time from your busy schedule to give me an oral history. Feel free to correct, delete, or change any of the index/transcription that you feel needs further clarity. You can send it back in the enclosed envelope. My email is jenbanh@yahoo.com and Cell: (951) 742-9610

APPENDIX F: Flyer Methodology

Have you ever wanted to share your experiences working, interacting, and/or negotiating with Disneyland and the experience of how they affected you? Have you ever wanted to talk about how Disney effected your perceptions or not affected them? Is your interaction with Disney positive or negative or more complex? How does Disney affect your family, business, and neighborhood?

RESEARCH on Hong Kong Disneyland



Hi, my name is Jenny Banh and I am an anthropology doctoral student at University of California, Riverside. I am conducting research on Disneyland. Specifically I am looking at worker perceptions, community relations, governmental officials, and executives for my research. My goal to see more clearly the impact of the opening of a new Hong Kong Disney on the Hong Kong government, residents, and workers. Before I go off to Hong Kong I want to do some preliminary research by conducting 30 or more oral histories on people's experience with Anaheim Disneyland. The interviews are anonymous and no real names will be used unless requested. I will then record and transcribe the 1 hour ½ interviews (time varies). Thank you for your time reading this and if you have any knowledge of any of the four aspects and would like to be interviewed, feel free to contact me.

I am looking for the following respondents who fit the criteria:

- Works or worked for Disney in any capacity
- Lives in an area effected by Disneyland
- Feels Disney has effected them in a significant way

If you would like to be interviewed or would like to know more about the project, feel free to contact me at jenbanh@yahoo.com. Your contribution to the study will add to the literature on how this company affects the world. Thank you for reading this.

- Jenny Banh, MA
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- University of California, Riverside
- 1334 Watkins Hall Riverside, CA, 92505
- Cell: (951) 742-9610 Email: jenbanh@yahoo.com

NOTES

¹ Asian “tigers” are touted because they are considered economic miracles. This notion of East Asian economic powerhouses also includes Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan.

² Neiland, Edward. (December 23, 1999) *Hong Kong Banks on Mickey Mouse; Hopes Disneyland will boost economy*. The Washington Times. Part A, Pg A13.

³ This was also the case for Hong Kong until McDonald’s taught the Hong Kong locals how to line up or queue by setting up a “queuing monitor” (Watson 1997).

⁴ In Italy there was a Mainland Chinese man who urinated in public and was arrested.

⁵ In fact if you go to any international school but the English School Foundation (ESF), in particular, there are *required* international trips every three months. My ESF students in HK all have stories of travelling to sing to Filipino Children, hold AIDS babies in Kenya, help build houses in Nepal, or tour museums in New York.

⁶ Summary of the results of this survey.

Local Hong Kong Resident Reaction to HKDL:

63% agreed that the benefits of HKDL outweighed costs.

86% welcomed the increased tourism that they anticipated HKDL would bring.

62% indicated that they liked the changes, with the most support given to the economic impact (e.g., employment; revenue generated for the local economy) and the least support expressed for the environmental impact, which include negative effects on the habitat of Chinese white dolphins and noise and air pollution from the fireworks.

27% of interviewees thought the deal was fair, 56% indicated that it was not.

70% indicated that their "opinions toward HK Disneyland have become more negative due to the problems that have been experienced since its opening." On the other hand, nearly one in five (18%) indicated that they disagreed with this statement.

61% indicated that the media coverage had been negative while 11% reported it as positive.

In response to the statement that "HK Disneyland is a socially responsible company," 28% of residents agreed while 47% disagreed.

In addressing concerns for the management of the park, 95% of survey respondents agreed that “HK Disneyland's communication with the public should be improved.”

(Source: Dr. John Ap, 2006 “Residents have mixed opinions toward Hong Kong Disneyland”, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Media Release)

⁷ Actually Hong Kong has the cheapest Michelin Star restaurant in the world and the food served there is delicious.

⁸ Kawaii fashion is so elaborate in Japan. It is a 20 something upper middle class female dress that many office young women engage in. They dress up as dark Alice in Wonderland on crack dresses, Gothic, Lolita, Japanese Animation characters, or any number of Victorian inspired garb. There are even men who cross dress into these whimsical outfits.

⁹ Chinese New Year is the biggest human migration in the world where you have hundreds of millions of people heading back to their ancestral homes.

¹⁰ Ironically, Hong Kong residents themselves often speak at faster and louder tone Euro-American standards.

¹¹ I was told by the cast members union organizer that the Filipino workers have a different contract. Another researcher who I met also confirmed to me that the Filipino dancers had different contracts of a shorter duration. This might give light to how different workers see or do not see their salary and contract scales in comparison to others. What they can see on the ground is their treatment

¹² See Alan Zeman: Mouse Killer by Vivian Kwok Feb 13, 2007 Forbes.com